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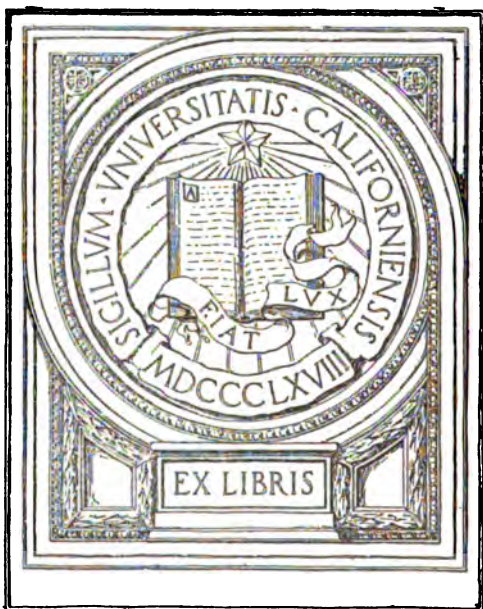
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A COLONIAL TRAMP

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CEYLON - ROAD TO MOUNT LAVENIA

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A COLONIAL TRAMP

Travels and Adventures in Australia and New Guinea

BY

HUME NISBET

AUTHOR OF 'THE LAND OF THE Hibiscus Blossom' 'NIGHT BELLS'
'MEMORIES OF THE MONTHS' ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. I.



An Ideal Rockhampton

London

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1891

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TO
THE AGENTS-GENERAL OF THE DIFFERENT
AUSTRALASIAN COLONIES
AND ALL THE NUMEROUS COLONIAL FRIENDS
WHO HAVE KINDLY ASSISTED ME
WITH THIS BOOK OF TRAVELS
I NOW BEG TO DEDICATE IT WITH THANKS
AND REGARDS

PREFACE

To my numerous colonial friends I wish to dedicate the following descriptions and experiences, because without their kindly assistance, advice, and directions, I could not have got along as I did, in the short time at my disposal, during my last tour through their land. Throughout the entire breadth and length of the great continent, and the two opposite islands, New Guinea and Tasmania, friends cropped up as thickly as the tares did in the scriptural devil-sown field (pardon the simile, but I could not, at the moment, think about anything of more phenomenal growth with the same sturdy qualities). But to continue; friends sprang up at every turn, all eager, and, what was more to the purpose, mostly all able, to help me as I sped along. I took their advice when I could do so, and tried to benefit by their experience; and as my former stay in the country enabled me to discriminate what was the most useful to my purpose, I now offer to them all the results, trusting that they may be fairly satisfied with my present efforts to please them.

It seems almost an invidious thing to particularise anyone, and I hope that those whose names I may forget to mention in this preface will discover throughout the pages that I have not forgotten to take full advantage of all that they so generously bestowed upon me in the shape of information; I hope also, that, as they pardon my bad memory for names, they will not be so modest as to abstain from taking the credit to themselves when their own particular bit comes in. I want them to say, 'I put him up to that gag,' or 'I sent him to that spot'; and so we will all be honest, and mutually well pleased each with the other—they in

their free gifts, and I in the using of them. Still, I think it to be my duty to mention with gratitude the names that are most strongly impressed upon the tablets of my memory, while acknowledging their many acts of disinterested kindness. In Victoria, Mr. Charles Gardner and Professor Morris, Messrs. Robert Waller of the *Australasian*, and Robert Russell the first surveyor of Melbourne, John Lang Currie of Lara, and James Dawson of Camperdown, the black-fellow's friend, besides many members of the Melbourne Press. In New South Wales, Mr. James Burns, of Burns, Philp & Co., and Brother Vosper, photographer, of Sydney. In Queensland, Messrs. Fergusson book-sellers, and the general members of the Johnsonian Club, Brisbane, with Vivian Bowden, Mr. Millman, and the other kindly friends at Thursday Island. In New Guinea, His Excellency the Hon. John Douglas, and Andrew Goldie, naturalist; the gentle Father Vergus of Yule Island, and Mr. Kessick of Teste Island, with the other traders scattered about; not forgetting the Rev. Samuel MacFarlane and James Chalmers, whom I met in London after my return. In Tasmania, Mr. Justin Brown and Mr. Morton of Hobart, and Mr. Birchall, of Walsh Brothers & Birchall, of Launceston; also Miss Mitchell, who so generously lent me her sketches, and Colonel Aitkinson of the *Launceston Examiner*, who presented me with so many of his most exquisite photographic pictures of this beautiful island. To one and all I now offer my best thanks, warmest regards, and never-to-be-forgotten feelings of brotherhood and friendship.

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CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST VOLUME

INTRODUCTION	PAGE 1
------------------------	-----------

CHAPTER I

FROM LONDON TO PANTELLARIA

Tilbury Docks—The English Channel—Bay of Biscay—Old Recollections—Spanish Coast—Cape Finisterre—English, Colonials, and Israelites—Cape St. Vincent—Lagos Bay— Sunset at Sea—Coast of Tunis—Cané and Zembra Islands— Pantellaria	6
--	---

CHAPTER II

MALTA

Places of Interest—Guides and Boatmen—Lace-making—Canary- vendors, &c.	17
---	----

CHAPTER III

TO KANTARA, IN SUEZ CANAL

At Sea—Death of Scedy-boy—Port Said—Coaling—Arabs—Suez Canal—Mirage—Night Effect	25
---	----

CHAPTER IV

FROM KANTARA, IN SUEZ CANAL, TO SOCOTRA

Kantara—Sunrise over the Desert—Ballah Lakes and Villages— Timsah—Ismailia—Suez—Hills of Attáka—Afterglow over Sinai—Donkeys and Guides of Suez—Troubles of an Amateur Dragoman—The Red Sea—Mount Gharib—Gebel Teir— Twelve Apostles—Abyssinia—Bab-el-Mandeb—Gulf of Aden —Socotra	84
---	----

CHAPTER V

CEYLON

	PAGE
Colombo Harbour—Mount Lavina—Adam's Peak—Sketching under Difficulties—Gautama—Buddhist Procession—Road to Kandy—Mountain Scenery—Kandy Temples, &c.—Gardens of Peradina	42

CHAPTER VI

AT SEA

The Doldrums—Incidents on Board—Cape Leeuwin—First Sight of Australia	61
---	----

CHAPTER VII

ALBANY

Albany and King George Sound—A Boorish Reception—Qualifications of a Settler—Secret of Colonial Success—Incidents in the Early Life of a Squatter	70
---	----

CHAPTER VIII

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Mortality of Sheep—The Rabbit and Sparrow Plagues—A Run through Adelaide—Landing in Melbourne—A Tragic Idyll	81
--	----

CHAPTER IX

MELBOURNE

Fashionable Melbourne—Robert Russell—Old Melbourne—Free Library—A Spoilt Epic—Floods—My Old 'Coach'	88
---	----

CHAPTER X

MELBOURNE—continued

Theatrical Experience—Little Bourke Street—Paddy's Market—Melbourne Life under the Surface—Something more to be Desired than Laudanum	97
---	----

CHAPTER XI

MELBOURNE—continued

Colonial Institutions—Fitzroy Gardens—Old Friends and Times—Our Commonwealth—The Yarra Yarra	107
--	-----

CHAPTER XII

VICTORIA

	PAGE
The Western District—Towards Camperdown—Geelong—James Dawson, Author of the 'Australian Aborigine'—His Work—The Black Fellow and his Ways	117

CHAPTER XIII

NATIVE NAMES OF PLACES

Western District—Camperdown, and Landscape round—Thompson's Mad Bull—Drive to Lara—A Victorian Station—Mount Elephant	128
---	-----

CHAPTER XIV

WESTERN DISTRICT OF VICTORIA

Birregurra and Colac—A Drive to Lorne—Black and Tiger Snakes—Walk through Cape Otway Forest	186
---	-----

CHAPTER XV

CAPE OTWAY FOREST

The Selector and his Family—All about Snakes—An Advice to Socialists—A Horrible Night—Mr. Milder of Geelong—Queenscliff and War Preparations	145
--	-----

CHAPTER XVI

TOWARDS NEW SOUTH WALES

The Gold-yielding Districts—Ballarat—The Eureka Stockade—The Revolt of 1854—Mr. McIntyre's Theory of Gold—A Modern Representation of Jerusalem	155
--	-----

CHAPTER XVII

BORDERLAND

Road to Deniliquin—A Human Mole—A Sunset at Castlemaine—The Bendigo Porter—A Working Larrikin—Echuca—A Lesson in Good Breeding	164
--	-----

CHAPTER XVIII

SHEEP-OWNERS AND THEIR ENEMIES

	PAGE
The Riverina—Dry Weather at Deniliquin—Temples to Tethys— 'Jackeries' and 'Cockatoos'—Old Baldy—An Old-fashioned Hotel at Castlemaine	177

CHAPTER XIX

THE LAKE DISTRICT OF GIPPSLAND

The Life of a Cattle Driver—Warragul—A Lenient Judge—Sale —The Lakes—A Native Poet	187
---	-----

CHAPTER XX

GIPPSLAND

Bairnsdale—The Lakes Entrance—Jamie the Aboriginal—A Night at Yarragon—A Mud Bath, and After	197
---	-----

CHAPTER XXI

THE BUSH

Monotony of the Bush—Yarragon—Size of Trees—A Young Man's Ideal—Laughing Jackasses—A Bush Church—The Bullock Driver—A Gentleman-Selector's Paradise—Beacons- field House and the Dandenongs—Weary Sundowners: a Theory—Farewell to Victoria	205
---	-----

CHAPTER XXII

NEW SOUTH WALES

Sydney—Peculiar Dreams—Liverpool—The Innocent Lag—Two Snake Stories—The Paupers' Asylum	217
--	-----

CHAPTER XXIII

CONVICTS

Some Reasons for Leaving out New South Wales—Mittagong— Berrima—Convicts—Bowral—A Walk to South Head	227
---	-----

CHAPTER XXIV

OLD SYDNEY

Old Days in Sydney—George Barrington—Convicts and their Masters—My Friend the Sea-Captain's Yarn	237
---	-----

CHAPTER XXV

OLD SYDNEY—continued

The Sea-Captain's Yarn— <i>continued</i>	PAGE
	248

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

Parramatta—Orange Groves—Penrith—Emu Plains—The Zig-zag—Educating Snakes—Over the Hills to Bathurst	258
---	-----

CHAPTER XXVII

BATHURST

Early Days in the Colonies—Governor Macquarie and the Great Blue Mountains Highway—Bathurst	268
---	-----

CHAPTER XXVIII

TOWARD BOURKE

From Bathurst to Bourke, and Towns between—Orange—To the Fish River Caves from Bathurst, and back by Katoomba— 'Auld Lang Syne'	279
--	-----



ILLUSTRATIONS

TO THE FIRST VOLUME



PLATES

CEYLON ROAD TO MOUNT LAVINA	<i>Frontispiece</i>
AN IDEAL ROCKHAMPTON	<i>Title-page</i>
ZEMBRA ISLAND	<i>page 6</i>
THE LAZARETTO	16
ST. ELMO	24
PORT SAID AND SUEZ CANAL	32
SUEZ AND RED SEA	40
CEYLON	58
WESTERN AUSTRALIA	72
PORT PHILLIP HEADS	88
YARRA YARRA AND GEELONG	120
BUSH FIRE	186
A SELECTOR'S HUT	152
ON THE RIVER MURRAY	168
LAKE DISTRICT, GIPPSLAND	184
ABORIGINAL HUT IN FERNS GULLY	200
SEA-CAPTAIN'S YARN	248
SEA-CAPTAIN'S YARN	256
THE BLUE MOUNTAINS	264

IN TEXT

	PAGE
GIBRALTAR	12
STREET IN MALTA	20
WHITE TOWER, WILLIAMSTOWN	114
THE VEILED HARPY	141
A BULLOCK TEAM	211
THE SUNDOWNER	215
A SNAKE	222
SYDNEY HARBOUR FROM DOUBLE BAY	238

A COLONIAL TRAMP

INTRODUCTION

THE year 1886 opened up about as inauspiciously as it possibly could open, both as regards the weather and as regards my own hopes and prospects.

Ice and snow alternated with fogs and gloom, which, beginning in November, progressed from bad to worse, until life became a misery to those who had to endure the hardships of the snow or slush-lined streets.

Personally, it was a constant series of dampening disappointments. I had made a set of plans, as early as October, to accomplish Australasia in a given time, and four months had been wasted in re-arranging, altering, re-planning new routes, trying to curtail time, and waiting, in an oscillating state between faint hope and chill despair, until at last I had almost become passive and careless as to the result of my four months of planning and alteration—the enthusiasm with which I first plunged into the work being nearly frozen to death.

I knew my ground well from former experience, also the time which it would take me to go over it, and do the work conscientiously which I had to do; therefore, to be

cut down from five years to two years, and afterwards to have to re-arrange my plans so as to go over land and water to the extent of 35,000 miles, sketching and writing, in one year; and, finally, either to give up all hopes of doing it, or promise to crush five years of conscientious work into a little more than six months—all this, with a wretched winter aiding the other discomforts, made me, as the time dragged on, more and more inclined to shy from it altogether, and fix my attention on something else.

A tramp through Poland, at present so little known, where my pen and pencil would find work enough to satisfy even my intense craving for exertion; a journey from London through Russia, Siberia, Afghanistan, and India, has ever loomed up, now and again, as a job gigantic enough to fill out time: or a trip through China and Japan, to make quaint drawings of the Celestial homesteads—to grasp the world, if I could, with my note-book, and bind it up in cloth-and-gold.

These and other plans and projects hovered up, with the fascinating allurements of smoke-visions, to be looked at and laid aside, in a half-created way, after that broad, first rub-in which painters love to lay aside, and look at occasionally, until circumstances force the taking up and putting into definite and saleable form; while I waited on the decision which was to send me off once more to my old haunts, or leave me projecting fresh ideas. At length the order came, as it generally does in these lingering cases, to pack up and quit England by the first P. and O. steamship; a few days to make all preparations, and say good-bye to those I was leaving behind.

No one likes promptitude more than I do; but to be hurried up, at the end of four months of hot and cold uncertainty, with only three days to arrange matters for twelve months of absence, and that awful six months of mental

anxiety and bodily fatigue in front, did not serve to rekindle the enthusiasm with which I had first regarded the task. Still, it was better than an abandonment of my idea ; for I am of that dogged disposition that, once a project takes life, until it is accomplished in some way or another it will not be dismissed, but returns again and again, like an importunate beggar, so that I am forced to yield to it before I can regain peace.

Knowing this very unhappy obstinacy of mine, I had partly prepared for going, feeling assured in my own mind that, if not successful with the present firm who were negotiating, some other firm would have to send me to the hemisphere of the Southern Cross, willy nilly, else I would never find rest in this portion of the globe ; for I had sent my wife and family to the country during the first ice of November, and had most of my belongings and boxes packed, and ready for storing.

To read over my contract-papers and sign them, interview the chief of the firm, purchase the articles wanted on the voyage (I did not buy all the things marked as strictly indispensable on the voyage, for I had been long sea-voyages before, and one learns to do without, and trust to Providence for a great deal, after having crossed the Line once or twice), store my goods to be left behind, secure our berths, and listen to a few final instructions from headquarters ; and then I turned my face towards that little country village on the banks of Tweed which held all that I cared for in this world, beyond the Work, which is always with me, go where I may.

What a blessed thing an object is, no matter whether it succeeds or fails ! Already, in this snowdrift which was whirling about the carriages, and blocking up the fading light, as we rushed towards Scotland, my mind was travelling and perspiring under tropical suns, through bush-lands,

where the charred gum-stump stood out blackly against dead, white branches and sharding trunks, while from the dried-up ground uprose whirlwind clouds of powdered grass, dun-tinted against the shivering, softly azure space. I was coming to say Farewell with the feeling upon me of returning from a hard task successfully accomplished.

As this is not the record of sentiment, but the descriptive account of a year of travel, with comparative notes of a country, seen again after a space of fourteen years, where months do as much reform as years can afford to work in England, I shall not intrude my private feelings, beyond a few words relative to that parting.

My wife, like most people who have not been abroad, had very vague notions of the probable experiences in store for me: some dangers she imagined where no such dangers could exist, while, by a happy ignorance, the real points of insecurity never occurred to her.

However, on one point she showed a knowledge of locality not quite satisfactory to me. It appears that some kind friends had lent to her papers with full accounts of recent atrocities in New Guinea, during the four months of my probation, and on that point she was very positive.

‘Remember, you must not go to New Guinea.’

I replied somewhat Jesuitically, I am afraid, and drew her attention from that undesirable topic of conversation, without committing myself in any way.

We had to sail on January 28; so, as most of my arrangements were completed, I resolved to take the night train up on the 27th, thereby giving myself as much time at home as I could take, and as little time to inhale the sulphur and fogs of London streets.

A most miserable night to travel through, that night of the 27th—wild hurricanes of driving snow, piling up on the windows and hedges, weighing down the telegraph-wires

which were not already broken with the weight of former snowstorms, and with a wind that whistled through keyholes and howled down chimneys as we sat together by the fire, in the bedroom where our children slept, waiting upon the coming of the machine which had been ordered to bear me to the station.

9.30 P.M., and the moment had arrived for us to part. The snorting of the struggling horses, as they fought with the heavy roadways and blinding drift, told us it had come, for the clogged wheels made no noise. Snatching up my little handbag and rugs, I bent over the bed to kiss the little sleepers, before her who was to have the weary charge—bending over the little cot which held my curly-headed Bell, I took my *last kiss* of the rosy lips ; and thus, together, my wife and I ran downstairs.

A wild, buffeting blast as we flung open the outer door, to see the coach, an ungainly, black object, in the midst of that dull grey waste, heaving about as the two horses are urged towards the bar of yellow light which the dark shadows of our figures break up ; while at the same moment a vivid flash of lightning stabs swiftly through those dense snow curtains, followed by an ominous peal of thunder ; and then the storm goes on as before, with the great soft flakes crowding down faster than ever.

‘Don’t go at all,’ cried my wife, who is Border-bred, and embrued with superstition. ‘It is an omen of evil, and there will be an accident.’

‘Rather an omen that I will make a noise in the world, and shine,’ I replied, bidding her farewell, and jumping into the conveyance.

A last glance backwards, as that loved figure stands out darkly in the doorway, with the mellow lamplight behind her, and then we have rounded the corner, and my long journey has begun.

CHAPTER I

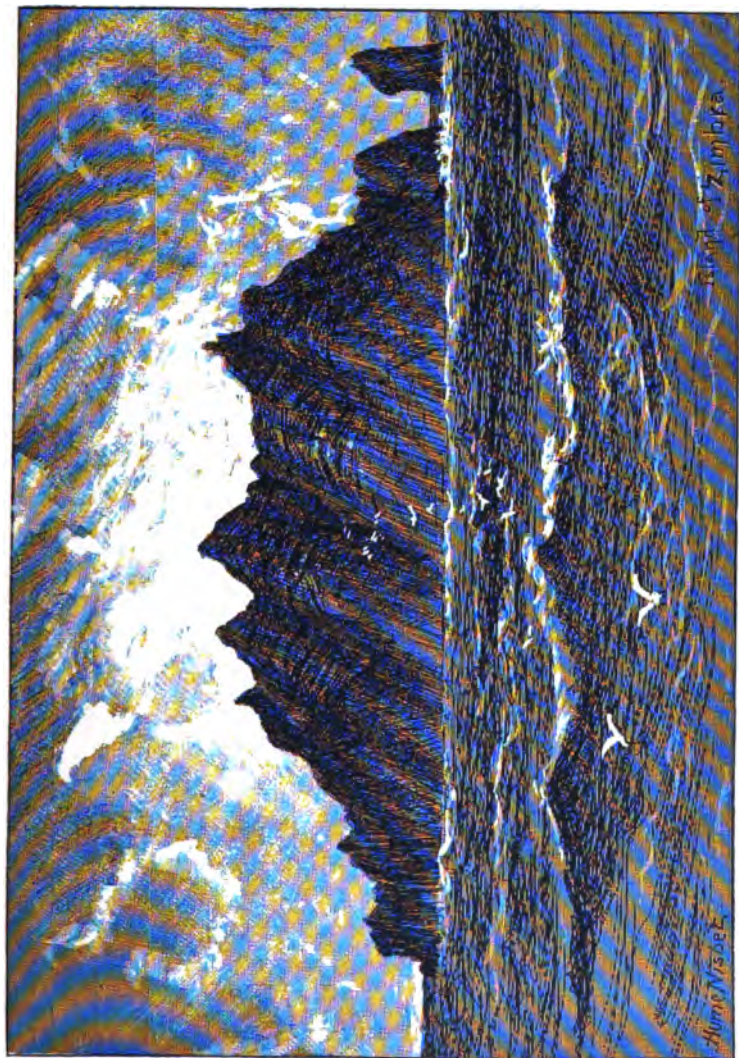
FROM LONDON TO PANTELLARIA

Tilbury Docks—The English Channel—Bay of Biscay—Old Recollections—Spanish Coast—Cape Finisterre—English, Colonials, and Israelites—Cape St. Vincent—Lagos Bay—Sunset at Sea—Coast of Tunis—Cané and Zembra Islands—Pantellaria.

SAILORS are not nearly so superstitious now as they were in olden days. I had a feeling that we would not start upon our journey before Friday, and so it came to pass. All Thursday we hung about the docks at Tilbury with the friends who had come to see us off, waiting, and trying to keep up the same air of interest which we were attempting to simulate, but with an utter sense of boredom over us all.

Why people will linger on wharves and railway-platforms to see the last of their friends I cannot say, and I do not suppose they could either; an hour more or less can make no difference when good-bye has to be said. It comes much better when uttered abruptly, for the prolonging of it has the effect which the stretching out of all climaxes have—to weaken it, and weary both actors and audience. Power, tragedy, and strength are always swift and sudden in their action; and pathos descends inevitably to bathos when it is long-drawn-out.

It was very kind of our friends to come; although, as far as I was concerned, they were mere temporary acquaintances, to whom it did not matter greatly whether we ever saw one another again or not: and after we had looked over



XEMBRA ISLAND

the splendid P. and O. steamship 'Parramatta,' and partaken of a little lunch and a couple of cigars, we fell back upon our pipes, wishing that this parting ceremony were past, and that either they or the vessel would get away, so that we might settle down to our new life, and have a moment to our own reflections.

At length the gangway planks were removed from the wharf and the last of the good-bye-bidders warned fairly ashore, my old friend being the very last to leave the deck—a most energetic septuagenarian, who put us all to the blush with his daring activity, and who has lived long enough to be fixed in his conviction that there is nothing worthy of respect under the sun except success; so I must succeed if he is to be my friend—and we can go below, and see to the placing of our luggage.

Down the Thames, with its crowded boat-life, too often described to be told again here; past Gravesend, Sheerness, and Shoeburyness; Dungeness, Hastings, and Beachy Head. Near the latter place a friend of mine watched the combat between the 'Alabama' and the 'Kearsage,' June 19, 1864; he was on board the yacht which picked up Captain Semmes after the sinking of his vessel, and speaks with enthusiasm about the gallant but unlucky Confederate.

A bustling hour at Portsmouth: then Southampton, the Isle of Wight, Dartmouth, Eddystone Lighthouse—which starts out trimly on that cold, grey sea, with the white sails of countless craft homeward or outward bound—and we have left the chalk cliffs of England in our rear—not much to look at after our red-sandstone walls of Scotland, I think: although, perhaps, the sensation slowly creeping over me has something to do with this prejudice on my part—that sensation so well known in the past, for which the rising waves are accountable, with that awful Bay of Biscay in the near front.

Weather getting rougher every hour. Yet, thanks to the splendid ship, we can hardly gauge the full severity of the storm which we are steaming swiftly into. The Captain in his after-report marked it 'very heavy,' and we hear afterwards of several shipwrecks which occurred at this time in the Bay. I have the deck pretty nearly to myself, but when I try to take notes, my paper is washed away; yet the effects are too magnificent to pay attention to a few discomforts of that sort, while I feel better above, in the biting blast, than below, in the stuffy cabin.

The Bay of Biscay, with the tempest at its wildest, and the 'Parramatta' doggedly plodding her way through it all.

Sea-voyages now are stripped of a vast deal of the romance and discomforts of old 'clipper' days. We go through a tempest now, which would then have knocked things to pieces, with hardly a roll: there is no waiting on winds or lying becalmed at the Line for weeks, as I have lain; as there are none of those bird-like sensations when the ship flew slantways before a fifteen-knot-an-hour breeze. All those experiences and uncertainties are over in our steam days; we slip out of a stationary hotel ashore, to a floating hotel, with the same crowd about us, and the day of our arrival at each port as definitely fixed as the hours of tiffin and dinner are.

No chance of being driven, as I have been, from the coast of Africa to nearly within sight of America, on the wings of a steady gale. We can go round the Horn now without the slightest risk of seeing the icebergs of the South pole, although I have gone over those mighty waves until the vessel was in danger of being submerged with the weight of the salt-water ice-sheets which were each minute being laid on, layer above layer, as the wash curled about our cordage and poured along our decks. Those horrors are

all overcome by the hand of science, and we can watch the tempest, impotently writhing around us, from the well-appointed decks of to-day, as securely, and with nearly the same comfort, as we might from a sheltered sea-coast.

The Bay of Biscay is never a pleasant portion of the world to cross, even at its best. I have gone over it several times, and only once in calm weather ; and then we nearly ran into the water-logged hulk of a wreck called 'The Stormy Petrel.' We sighted it just at sunrise—a scarlet and purple sunrise—as it lay helpless on those glassy rollers, like an abandoned, death-dealing corpse ; an hour earlier, and it might have made a wreck of us, for it was directly in our track. These wood-laden craft never sink, but drift about like so many rocks, with the constant danger of ships sailing into them in the dark, until someone takes the trouble to blow them up with dynamite.

On this last day of January the Bay is much rougher than we can estimate from our safe and steady positions ; cold, yet I fancy not so keen as it blew yesterday in the Channel. It feels moister and more salty, the water very blue, with foam undertones of an antwerpy and emerald mixed tint, the light side of the waves catching purple lights from the scurrying, dove-coloured clouds overhead, with under or shaded sides bottle-blue to slate colour. Once we catch a glimpse of an ordinary-sized steamer fighting against the blast, and by this we can partly measure its strength with the magnitude of the waves. I am too sea-sick to venture below, so stay on deck and watch.

Feb. 1st.—We passed Cape Finisterre about nine o'clock on this our second morning out. The Cape showed out for a few moments from the dense veil of mist—only long enough to let me make a pencil-sketch. Sea greyer and more slaty in tone, sky hazy and grey, with heavy showers ; everything very moist, yet withal a decided feeling of comfort. We can

now go on deck without overcoats and winter-gloves, and the male passengers are beginning to appear, while one daring lady joins us at breakfast. My companion thinks he would like to try a walk with me on deck, although it is a day of drenching showers, with a gleam of yellow amongst the grey haze where the sun should be at setting, and waves growing less.

Feb. 2nd.—Cape Espichel shows up about seven o'clock this morning. Headland half-veiled in mist, with rainbow over to the right, and water sap-green in the near depths, terre-verte in middle distance, and passing through gradations of colour to blue-grey in the far-off distance: a lovely morning, with a balmy south-west-breeze, and steamer passing steadily over the little-crested waves. The passengers are all coming out of their cabins, and beginning to get friendly with one another. They seem a free lot, with a few exceptions: Colonials returning home, and one or two lively Jews and Jewesses going out to visit colonial friends, with fewer specimens of the John Bull type than are usually to be found in these floating P. and O. or Orient Hotels.

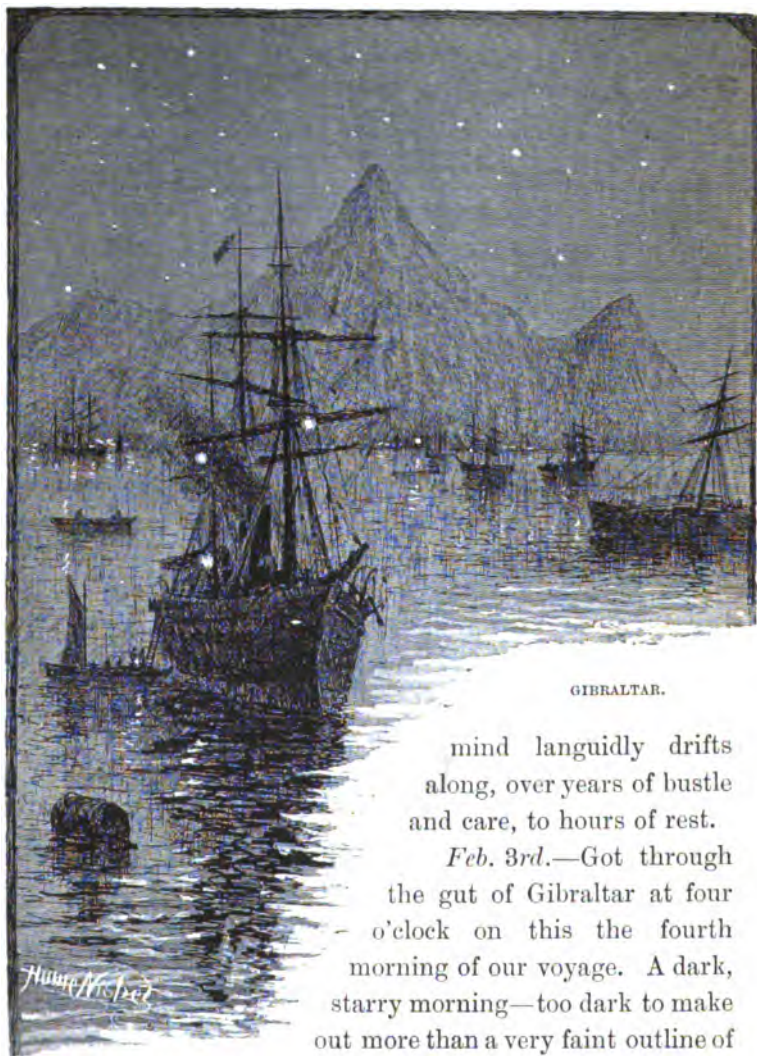
The Colonial is free in his manners, and accessible, as a rule, both when travelling and at home; the Jew is mostly social and open in his intercourse, being cosmopolitan. But John Bull is naturally assertive, suspicious, and conservative at home or abroad, more particularly when travelling abroad, his polish being a veneer which will not stand much damp or discomfort.

Of course, there are exceptions, always and everywhere; which only goes to prove the rule, as these exceptions are, without fail, men and women who have travelled so much about the world that they have absorbed, unconsciously, the best of other national qualities, until they have lost their own characteristics.

I like to travel with Australians and Jews, and I think

we can appreciate one another, as I admire them both with a vast admiration—the Australian for his pluck and enterprise, and the Israelite for the antiquity of his name and unsullied descent; of which, by the way, he never boasts, even although in the company of some mushroom-aristocrat of some ten or twenty befogged generations, who is looking unutterable things, in the way of stand-offishness, at the Oriental wearer of a pedigree reaching back through a crystal vista of many centuries. Therefore, if I have been taught to venerate genealogies and respect blood, and can bend my back to a lord of yesterday's creation, how much the more ought I to salaam to these pure-blooded sons and daughters of kings and princes, and be grateful for the condescension of any of this great race, honoured and ennobled by the Maker of earth, than of one of the obscure races which He taught them, through their leaders and prophets, in the first instance, very properly to despise.

We are all on deck, getting acquainted, and enjoying the balm of this rapidly-developing summer, as we watch the sky clearing and the light playing over the ocean's surface, and bringing out portions of the Spanish coast which we are passing so swiftly. Of Cape St. Vincent I get some finely-lighted sketches as we come up to it, and leave it behind, Lagos Bay and Cape de St. Maria in the distance, before we steam out of sight of land, with a most gorgeous sunset on the western side, golden with violet haze above an intensely blue ocean; next, a twilight very sombre and fine, with a large, white star lying near to a dark purple bank of clouds, low in tone, and awe-inspiring, as the light slowly faded out, and the night came, luminous and calm, with stars flashing above like bright lamps, and the phosphorescent sparkles blending with and lighting up the green foam-furrows which the swiftly-rushing hull throws up on either side—a night to lie on deck, watching, while the



GIBRALTAR.

mind languidly drifts along, over years of bustle and care, to hours of rest.

Feb. 3rd.—Got through the gut of Gibraltar at four o'clock on this the fourth morning of our voyage. A dark, starry morning—too dark to make out more than a very faint outline of the Rock and the African coast.

Through the night-glass I could make out form enough, with the lights from Tangier showing dimly behind the more luminous lighthouse lamps, to make a rough sketch of the

general effect, with the position of the lights and reflections. I regretted much that we did not see this historical and still-disputed possession by day. I had seen so many pictures of it, that I seemed to know it thoroughly. But it has been my lot always to pass it by night—sometimes moon-lighted, sometimes, like the present time, star-mantled. But yet, what stars they are, like coloured lanterns hung up on high: two above the mast are red and yellow, with the dim lights from the officers' quarters like nearer orbs, and other, stronger lights, from ships and beacons, red, yellow, and green. These star-like jets of gleaming in front of that looming Indian-ink-like waste, against the mellow depth of the upper space, where the blazing worlds are rolling, with the sea flowing rapidly but silently through that narrow strait, and filled with phosphorescence, and the ship gliding, ghost-like, through it all, fill me (the only passenger left on deck) with a thrilling sense of immensity, as if I were treading my way through a world of stars.

By day we had sighted the Sierra Nevada mountains, lying about forty to sixty miles inland, yet from our distance looking as if rising from the sea. As we advance they loom up grander every hour, snow-covered, and resting, dazzlingly white, in the lights against a cloudless velvet sky, pale green above the snow, with suggestions of madder-gleams through it, and undertones of violet-grey where the indentations and gorges throw the snow-heaps into shadow. As the eye wandered to the sea-line, strongly demarked, the local colouring is that of sterile sand and rocks rose-purple, ruddy and ochrey with green-grey and blue-grey intersections, very faint and filmy—a lovely scene to look upon, with outlines definite but tender, like a gauze-curtained picture rising from a sparkling and amethyst sea.

Feb. 4th.—Out of sight of land, a good fair wind, with a peculiar but glorious sunset, of which I got a sketch. It

appeared more like the mirage of a view ashore on a magnified scale, done in gold and purple, than ordinary clouds. A warm, mellow-tinted sun, with an open space below it, along which a vessel with sails set was passing. On either side of the golden space, russet clouds stood upright like trees, with a broken-up mass above. This is a portion of the globe where sunsets are to be seen to perfection; they are as vivid as, but remain longer, and with slower gradations, than at the Equator. To-night there is a soft, yet powerful lustre, spreading from the sun over the warm grey of the clouds—a lustre slowly changing from old-gold to orange, as the sun dips below the sea-line; large and glowing masses hang above, with a deep blue, heaving sea, with not much reflection from the sun and none from the clouds. The passengers are now quite friendly with one another and confidential. The smoking-room is a great institution—quite a luxurious den, with marbled and gold ornamented walls, and plush-covered seats, placed near the fore-part of the ship. (When I returned from my journey we met this steamship at Suez, and visited her. They had made alterations, removing the smoking-room to the poop, and curtailing its dimensions. I felt as if the ship had lost something of much importance, besides its genial captain). The male portion of the passengers nearly all smoke, and those who do not are glad to come in and listen to the stories and jokes retailed here. Two, however, who frequent the place, sit very silent when the jests become broad—one, a genial old gentleman, who has travelled often in these waters, and who leaves us at Malta; and another, who seldom speaks, even at the best, but seems to carry an unacted tragedy upon his melancholy features and within his purely blue eyes. I refer to young Bainbridge, who met his death so tragically, a few months afterwards, at the destruction of the Pink Terraces, New Zealand.

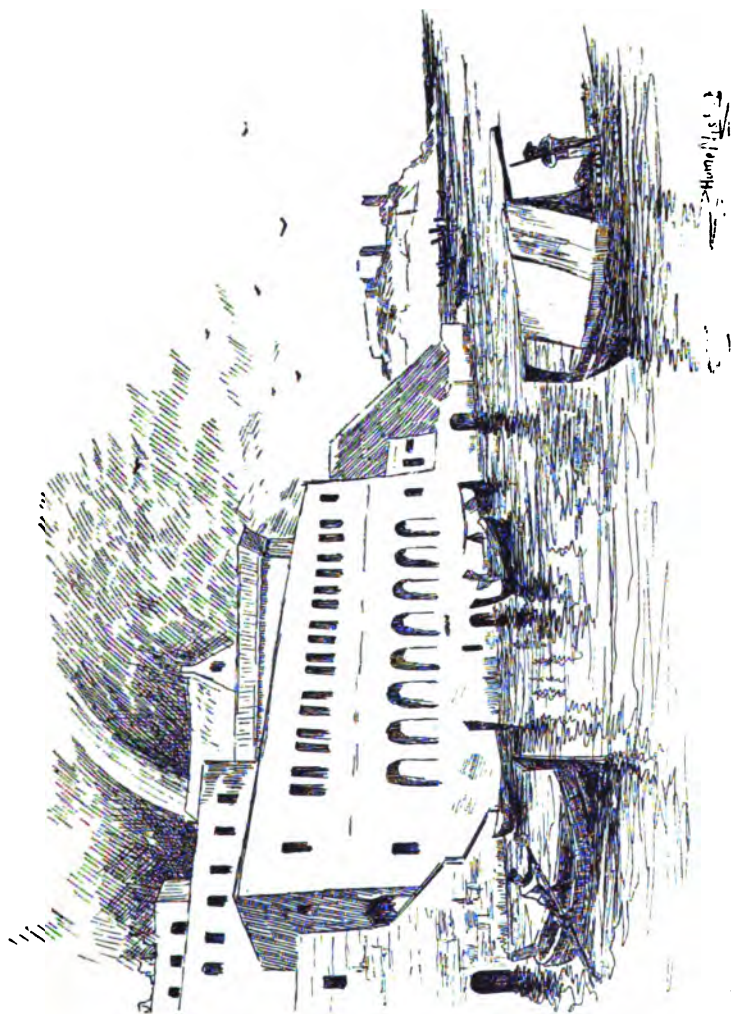
Sunrise, and we are coming upon it and the Island of

Galita the next morning, nearly in front of the site where Dido built her Carthage. As I look, I think upon the vivid descriptions given of these parts, and the people who there struggled their day out, by Gustave Flaubert in his 'Salamambo,' and seem to see in this sunrise and lemon-tinted sky, with that russet-purple island, once more the fleet of Carthagenian galleys filling up the blank space of cloud-land and tossing waters. Sea-birds are on the wing over the bold, slanting rocks between us and the coast of Africa; a warm glow spreads over the sky, with clouds which remind me of that fancy picture of Turner's, 'Ulysses deriding Polyphemus'; while the sea is of a bottle-green. The same earth and sky as when Dido played the trick with the bullock's hide in order to win the site of her future city, or, later on, died for the love which she could not command. It is a region fraught with romance, and it takes me all my time to keep to everyday facts, of which there are plenty this day to note, as we pass along that coast of Tunis. Now a burst of sunshine, making a brilliant gleam of emerald on the distant waters, with a tawny glow of gold and red over the purple shore, like, for all the world, autumn-dyed bracken and heather in bloom on a distant moorland. It is astonishing how little difference there is between a scene at home and a scene abroad when viewed afar off: the changes are more rapid and metallic as we near the sun, softer and moister in our own land—and that is all, so long as we don't get near enough to define the flora, or fashion of the buildings.

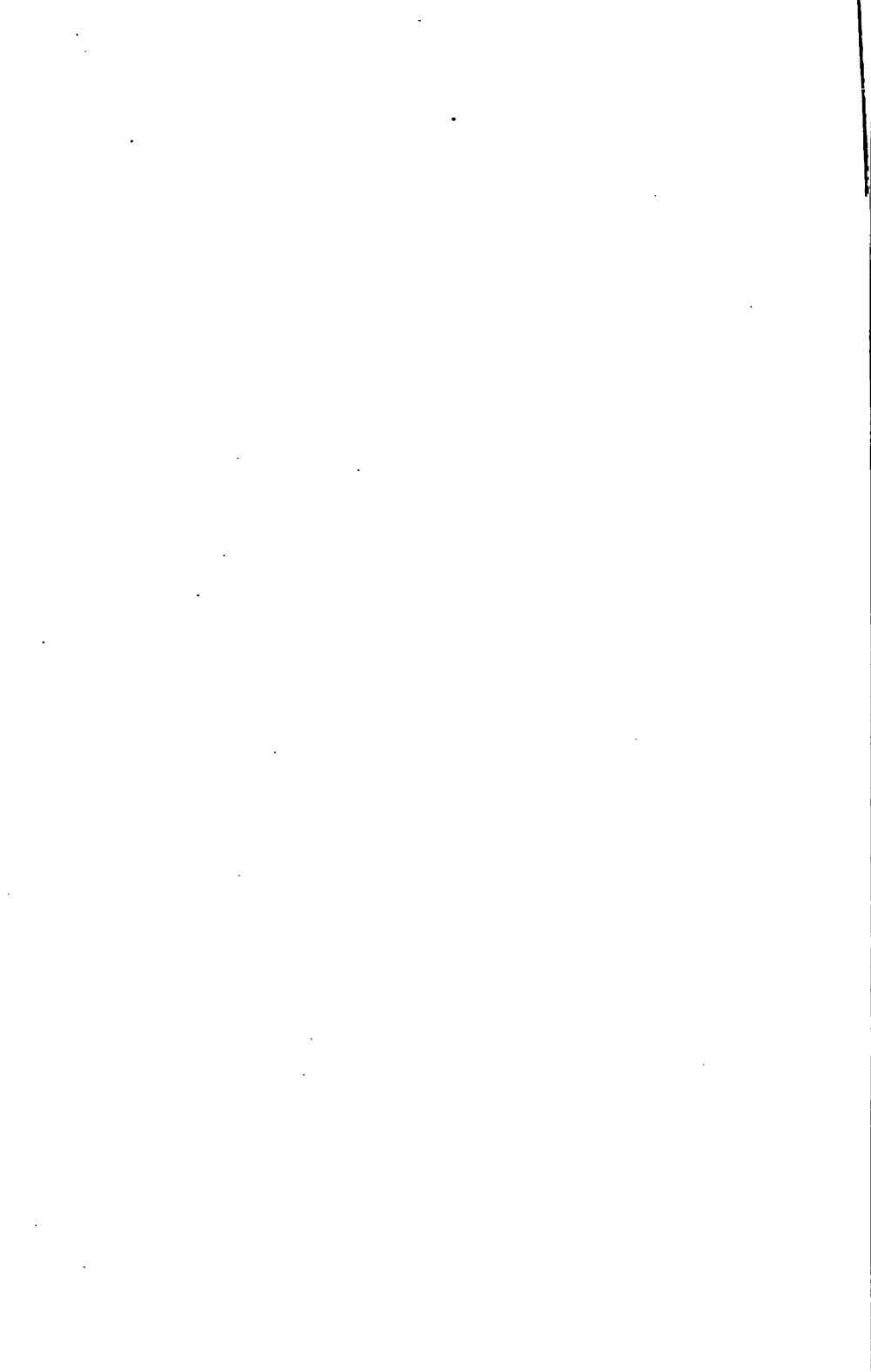
As I sketch, we pass a town. Custom has given me sharp discernment, so that I know from the shape of the light markings that they are flat houses, and not rocks, and, borrowing the glass from my neighbours, make out that I am right, and also can see enough to correct my sketch. Reaches of headland, with a finely-clouded sky and strong effects of light and shade. Cané Island looms in sight,

with its lighthouse, of which I get a sketch ; then the bold island of Zembra, looking like Salisbury Crags set upon the waters—deep red colour, and sterile, with splits and gorges ; a bitter mass of rocks to go against in a storm.

It is evening when we get up to Cape Bon, with an orange and russet sky, diversified by heavy clouds of intense purple, against which the crimson glare of the lighthouse shows out strongly—an ominous sky, with just a tiny space of clear beyond, like a sleeping tarn in the midst of a table-land ; the most suitable sky for this part, where crime sighs out its years of forced penance on that lofty, tower-capped rock, Pantellaria. Through the night air we hear, or seem to hear, a chorus of groans, accompanied by the stern music of rattling chains.



THE LAZARETTO



CHAPTER II

MALTA

Places of Interest—Guides and Boatmen—Lace-making—Canary-vendors, &c.

I ROUSED myself, on this our seventh day from London, in good time to see the harbour of Valletta—our first rest on the journey. To the right of us, as we drop anchor, is the Lazaretto; while to the left rear up the yellow, stone fortifications of Ricasoli, St. Angelo, Manoel, St. Elmo, &c. In front are the open waters of the Mediterranean, of a translucent tint almost impossible to describe, except by the name of the pigment which I used chiefly in making my sketch, viz., cobalt-green; a deep blue sky when not overcast, although at times it feels very chilly, with heavy hail-showers, and black thunderclouds looming up behind, and bringing into startling relief the yellow- and white-washed buildings.

Malta, the graveyard of chivalry in more senses than one, the stronghold of the Knights of St. John, the city of relics—relics of feudal ages, church architecture, superstition, and diseases obsolete in all other quarters of the globe. Here you may see the Scriptures more fully illustrated in the way of bodily infirmities than even at Port Said or Suez. Here a charitable man might be a modern Croesus, and yet come to want in less than a week, without diminishing the frightful destitution; for here beggars multiply fast enough to

populate a new world; they crowd about you like flies round a bit of tasty beef in the summer months. You must rub against them—nay, blend with them and all their varied suggestions of nastiness, whether you like it or not. There is no getting away from them, any more than from the guides. Were Malta twice as crammed with reminiscences of a glorious past than it is, it would not be worth the penalty of having to mix with that fearsome cloud of moving witnesses to the imperfections of Nature.

We hear all about the places to visit before we leave the ship: the Palace of the Grand Master, with its corridors and armoury; the Market-Place and Granary, the Aqueduct, and lovely church of St. John. Also, one passenger goes into raptures over the beauties of Florian, its mummies; &c. But little is said of the beggars or the guides, else we might have stayed on board, and braved the coal-dust in preference.

As this city of walls and fortifications, fine silk lace and silver filigree work, mantillas and high-heeled Parisian boots, rags and loathsomenesses, importunate guides and car-drivers, mud of the shade of whitewash and the adhesiveness of glue; narrow streets, down which the sun drifts with a dazzling golden or white lustre, leaving shadows of a blue-grey, where the visitor may vainly try to stand back on purpose to see the rich carvings on the house-fronts or moresque lattices in blue and green, where ruddy-cheeked brunettes peep out mischievously, but vainly; for in front chatter the guides, who cannot be dismissed, while about you closes a heaving mass of tattered humanity, like a roaring ocean around a rock—as this city is now a common place of call, which all going eastward or southward must see and know as much as the natives will permit to be seen, and as it has been described so much already, I would pass from it with as few comments as

possible, seeing that I can only speak with any pleasure of what I saw while on the deck of the ship 'Parramatta,' the rest being a hideous nightmare of horrible faces and fearful smells, with an indistinct impression of white walls and blue sky.

From the deck I saw novel-shaped boats darting about, and painted a bright green or blue colour with red stripes; sunburnt boatmen, with bonnets like the old Scotch ones, and skinny, bare arms, looking like half-dressed monkeys, as they stood upright while they rowed.

'Give them sixpence only,' cried out the captain as we got into our different boats; this I did on landing, to be followed, as I walked up the steps, by the boatmen and hundreds of their friends, cursing, imploring, and reviling us, as we kept steadily on, neither looking at them nor replying to their abuse or pitiful entreaties: and all this fuss because we had given them their just fare. London cabmen have a manner with them not dissimilar to the boatmen of Malta, only that they seem to curse you in a manlier style; the Maltese have a sneaking, cowardly way, much more distasteful than the Cockney habit of sarcastic extortion.

After the boatmen had become merged with the crowd of beggars, the guides took us up. We ordered them away without result, for others came swarming up with their explanations. We swore at them (cursing is the prevailing mode of communication between the stranger and the native); they retorted with a bow and a pleasant smile. One tattered specimen took bodily possession, and would not relinquish his supposed prey after trying all means to rouse his sense of pride, even to turning him about and kicking him (a mode of dismissal, by the way, which, fortunately for us and our ignorance of the laws of the land, Malta being independent and self-governed, we administered in a quiet street, or we might have found ourselves prisoners

for the assault). It appears that, besides lace-making and begging, this is one of the ways in which the people of



Malta manage to eke out an honest existence—to aggravate strangers into an assault, and then get them imprisoned on

the charge until the vessel goes without them, after which they are liberated, and given over to the ravishers until the next ship comes in ; this we learnt afterwards, and were able to congratulate ourselves on our escape. Meanwhile, we were compelled to leave our forced friend alone, as he remarked that he was only taking a walk, and had as much right in the streets as we had. We owned he had more right, and allowed him to explain what he liked, going about as we felt inclined, without heeding his words or frantic cries for us to pass up certain ways.

Up the streets with many steps from the waterways to the Strada Reale. Here we intended posting our letters and returning straightway, but, meeting some of the passengers, were induced to see some of the buildings, which I do not intend to describe. We saw them, and would have admired them also if we could have been let alone to be able to enjoy the place. Stay a week or two till the people are used to your face ; then, visitors say, if you give them nothing, they will leave you alone. I doubt it much, for hope seems eternal in the beggar's breast. Our guide kept at us like grim death, and not even the Church was sacred from him ; while on either side, completely blocking up our range of vision, hovered two cabs, moving as we moved, and stopping when we paused, like vultures watching a flock of sheep.

'We don't want cabs.'

No retort beyond the inviting smiles.

'We can guide ourselves.'

'I am not a guide, but one poor tailor,' replied our attendant.

'We don't require clothes.'

'But I have a wife and seven children.'

'We are not accountable for that.'

'But, excuse me, you are losing your way.'

It was then that we lost our patience and gave him the

corporal hint that he had better go ; but he only smiled, and thanked us for the civility, and for a few paces hung behind, very soon to be once more at our elbow.

(If you are in a hurry to see Malta, pay two guides to keep the others back.)

Near to King's Reading-Rooms I noticed amongst the crowd of maimed, lame, and sore-eyed applicants for charity, one old woman without any eyes, or signs that they had ever been in her face, which curious sight so moved even my numbed pity that, without considering the matter, I was just dipping my hand into my pocket in search of a copper, when a young English officer passing at the time, perceiving my action, laid hold of me forcibly, and in an excited manner asked me what I was going to do.

‘ Only spare a copper to that poor woman.’

‘ Then for God's sake don't do it, if you wish to get away yourself, or leave the streets open for any one else ; the news that a stranger has been known to give a copper would spread like wildfire through the Island, and cause a blockade.’

I put my penny back again, after testifying my gratitude to this genuine English gentleman for saving me from that awful catastrophe, and crushed my way through the pitiful mass.

The lace-making is most laborious work, and frightfully badly paid, the workers never making, even at their hardest, half-enough to keep them in bread ; so that it becomes compulsory for them to seek for sustenance elsewhere. I admire the delicate texture, but cannot look upon the finely-spun meshes without thinking upon other meshes, of a coarser texture, which envelop the lives of these poor women, who sit, day after day, wearing out their eyes spinning fine webs for the adornment of vanity, with the forces of

Nature tearing at their vitals in the urging on to live—a life not worth the labour of keeping together, and for which they are in no way accountable. They make, at the most, two-pence per day.

The oranges of Malta are the finest in the world. We see them hanging on the trees in the Governor's garden, and a strong temptation comes over me to stop, and make a rough sketch of the rich green shadow, with golden balls, against the whitewashed walls and street, filled with broad lights and strong depths, but must resist the temptation by reason of that awful guide.

Getting again to the quay, where we had once more a wild scene before we got away, we made our passage, by energetic pushing, through the lines of vendors of cigars, tobacco, lace, ornaments, oranges, and sponges. One man with canaries in cages stopped us at the water's edge with :

‘ Want a canary, sir ? ’

‘ Are they for eating ? ’ we asked him, to get rid of his importunity, and in a spirit of Mark-Twainish jocularity.

‘ No, no ! they are for singing. ’

‘ Ah ! we don't want them, if that is what they are for. ’

A brilliant thought struck the vendor, then he bolted after us, shouting :

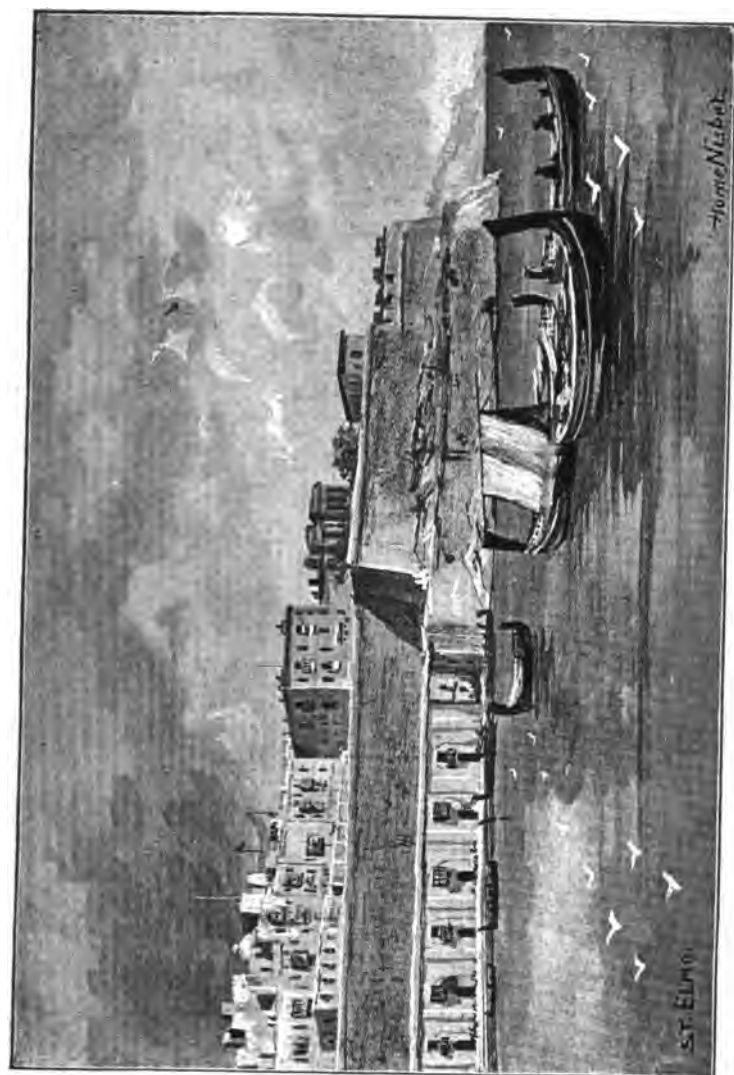
‘ Yes, yes ! they are for eating. Very good pie ; buy the lot. ’ And leaving his cages in charge of an assistant, he made off to tell the canary-vendors that there was a man who ate canaries, and might buy all that were in Malta ; and a fine time we had with cages after that, until we steamed away.

We got rid, after much effort, of our guides and boatmen, and made sketches when we could find a spot partly clear from coal-dust (it is a fearsome ordeal on board ship during coaling-time, when all get the appearance of sweeps, and every place is covered thickly with the fine, jetty dust) ;

and by 10 o'clock P.M. we were once more in the open sea, leaving this relic of old Phœnicia without much regret—the Melita of St. Paul, about which, as we read in the guide-books, a poet wrote :

Malta—the nursing-mother of heroes, and mirror of ancient days.

We thought upon our noble guide (who, by the way, returned to his spouse fee-less after all), the father of seven heroes and heroines of Malta, and reckoned that his mother had great credit of her nursing.



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CHAPTER III

TO KANTARA, IN SUEZ CANAL

At Sea—Death of Seedy-boy—Port Said—Coaling—Arabs—Suez Canal—Mirage—Night Effect.

Feb. 8th.—At sea one of the Seedy-boys (African stokers) died to-day about dawn, and was buried at sunset; his disease a most curious one, which we don't find, any more than we find elephantiasis, amongst Europeans. This the sailors call 'cussedness,' and the Africans, 'dibble dibble.' The boy simply became tired of his life, and seemingly had the rare faculty of being able to resign it when and where he pleased. He chose to die at daybreak, and his companions buried him, according to their own sacred rites, secretly, as the sun was sinking below the distant horizon. A few of the passengers knew what was going on; but we were requested to keep back, and not to look, as they do not like unbelievers to see their ceremonies. So we left them alone.

Feb. 10th.—Reached Port Said about seven A.M., and had a good view of the breakwater, lighthouse, and entrance of the Canal; also saw the black fins of a couple of sharks in the harbour, with the buildings, half-French, half-Oriental, and the crowd ashore—Arabs, Egyptians, Greeks, French, Italians, and other races, all mixing, with their many-tinted robes, blue, white, and red predominating; the rich tints on the house-walls, bazaars and fruit-stands;

the dhows and smaller boats cramming up the docks and landing-places ; the coal-barges being rowed across from the other side of the harbour, commanded by an Arab chief, and filled with demoniac, black figures, with cowl-like head-pieces of sacking, chaunting a song as they all pulled together, with the chief standing upright in their centre, gloomy and stern.

The 'Parramatta' has hardly anchored when the docks are clustering with picturesque forms : stalwart Arabians stalking about, with flashy turbans and snowy robes, spitting at our backs when we are not looking ; for we are not yet at peace with them, and they show their hatred when they can, even while cheating us as impartially as if they were our greatest friends and relations. The Eastern juggler is there also, with his rabbit and snakes, doing some marvellous sleight-of-hand tricks, and the usual vendors of photographs and Oriental knick-knacks manufactured in Birmingham.

Going ashore, we found the quay well-lined with guides and donkey-boys ; only here the guides are merry, and full of good-natured jokes, if mendacious, and it is no discomfort to be followed about by them, as at Malta. We were compelled to keep to the European quarters, as the Arab quarters are forbidden, owing to a present epidemic of small-pox. However, saturating our handkerchiefs with mild carbolic acid, we penetrated as far as we dared go—far enough to be satisfied with the smell and dirt ; and as there was little of interest to see in the safe streets, we strolled about with a little Egyptian boy, who was very smart and funny in his remarks, until it was about dinner-time, looking at the shops, and resisting, as far as possible, the mania for buying articles which we knew to be rubbish.

Passing down one of the side streets, we missed our little guide for a moment, and, as he had our parcels, we looked

round to see if he had not run off with them. We saw a dark, evil-looking, and dirty half-caste of some kind cuffing him about, in a very merciless style, at an alley-corner, from which the mangy-looking prowler had emerged. We turned to give some assistance to our little friend, when his bully left off, and shuffled into shadow once more.

‘Is that your father?’ we asked, thinking it must be so, as the boy had not resisted very much, and now merely shook himself together, without offering any explanation.

‘My fadder! No sar!’ with great scorn. ‘He one dirty thief, gentlemen, wanting the parcels, that’s all.’

‘Oh, that’s all, is it?’

‘Yes, sar; he gentleman who waits at dark corners when Englishman pass drunk at night, and stab.’

The boy made his simple statement about this stabbing thief-gentleman as if it was quite an ordinary incident, and we felt how nicely adapted the streets of Port Said are for getting drunk in at nights.

There is nothing beyond the streets to be seen at Port Said—a sandy flat, with hardly a tree, except some dwarfed specimens in what they call, by courtesy, gardens; one or two music-halls, where an orchestra of German ladies performs, open to the road, with lager-beer stands and gaming-tables; and a place which they call the Theatre, where fearful performances of the variety order are perpetrated, and where everything is most excessively dull. Cold mornings and nights at this time of the year, and very hot during the day, it must be very hard living here for the 15,000 inhabitants, with only the excitement of ships calling for coals.

The coal-heavers do a thriving business, though, and produce, as they load ships by torchlight, a scene like the Inferno, yet most impressive with the lights from vessels, the revolving electric light from the lighthouse-tower, the

brilliant stars—or, it may be, moonlight—and those dark, shapeless barges, with their blazing tripods, and on the gangways the black figures rushing constantly up and down with their baskets of coal.

We spent a weary hour or two at the Theatre, looking at the men with their wives, a mixture of all nationalities, sitting knitting and drinking, while our ears were well-nigh deafened with the horrible screechings from the stage. For a little while it was rather interesting to watch the different types around us, or, during the intervals, look on at the roulette-tables; but after a time we were glad to get back to our berths and think of the morrow.

Feb. 11th.—A sharp, misty morning, with coal-loaders going to work, being towed past the cabin window as we look out to see the sunrise. They look ghostly, with their dark profiles and peaked, cowl-like coverings, amongst the frosty, grey and red, lustreless sun, and the blurred shapes of cranks, coal-sheds and dhows beyond—a bloodshot sun, blended every few moments by rolling tissues of green-grey vapour.

As I pass along the gangway towards the bath-room, I see some Arabs working at the aft-hatch, under the directions of a powerful and ferocious-looking chief; they are tugging away at the cross-bar—a heavy beam, which half a dozen of the men seemingly cannot move. He loses patience, evidently, at their slow movements or lack of effort, for, with a word or two in Arabic, resting his left hand against the iron, upright post of the framework, he leans down, and, taking the beam by the end nearest to him, hoists it clear up, and so lays it down on the deck beside him, with no more effort, apparently, than if it had been a walking-stick; after which, with a scowl round at me for daring to look on while he so far forgot his dignity as a sheik, he dusted his hands and adjusted his robe. I looked with wonder at

this prodigious feat of strength ; for it took me all my time to move one end of it, and I did not believe it possible for any single man to lift it as he had done, staff-fashion, and with so little effort. The third mate, who was superintending, smiled at my face of astonishment, and informed me that this was an ordinary specimen of the men who had broken our square at Abu Klea, who united to this appalling strength the terrible fearlessness of bigotry. As I looked, and heard all this, a vivid picture of Khartoum rose up before me, with Gordon, the hero, alone amongst those ferocious hordes ; the march through the desert of our soldiers, and the sudden attacks when they were dead-beat with bodily fatigue, faint with hunger, and parched with mortal thirst. And while my back crept and curved with the icy horror of a hideous nightmare, my heart rose, and tingled with the pride of our United Kingdom, and gratitude to the father and mother who had given to me, as a birthright, a place in the bravest and most independent portion of it—Scotland ; it felt like being, amongst the Romans of Italy, a distinct native of Rome.

A warm forenoon as we entered the Suez Canal, this triumph of Lesseps, and before us a slow journey of four to five miles an hour along banks of grey, sad-coloured sand, with few objects of interest after the first novelty of being in the desert wears away, frequent stoppages to allow other ships which have the precedence to pass, occasional groups of wandering tribes, or caravans crossing to or from Jerusalem, with frequent mirages.

These mirages are not what we have supposed them to be. At times, as we look over the desert, we see patches of water, flat and glistening, with stretches of brown and violet tinted sands between and in front, and only by being told do we know there is no water near. This is no delusion of the eye, but a real gas—vapour being sucked from the

sand, and beaten upon by the white rays of the sun. At other times the ground rises, or appears to do so, and very slight elevations become exaggerated to high mounds. Again, objects at a distance are carried forward, and made important, unless they are of themselves insignificant; thus, a scrubby bush looks like a tree, all the more mysterious from the foot being cut off by those level lines of white, heat-vapours, so that it seems as if rising from a stream or lake, the bottom part magnified and indistinct, like a reflection.

I am hard at work sketching as we crawl along, or lie-to in the sidings—now a vessel waiting upon us, or a flat stretch of low-toned variation and subtle distance, unrelieved by subject, and therefore the more delicious to the artistic sense, with a sky above of that coloured monotone which intense midday heat produces, the sand absorbing all the glare until it appears almost like shadow; now a stretch of stone colour, with the shadow sides of the horizon throwing it out in strong relief; sometimes a long level without a break, except that mud-stirred, green roll of waters along the slaty sides; at other times a cutting, with low cliffs of sandstone, and where the mile-posts only break the wavy line; sometimes sloping banks of loose sand, along which Arabs, with their white, blue, or cinnamon-tinted robes, girt up to the knees, walk in line, towing along their sail-furled dhows; again, a family on the march, sullen and 'vengeful, who stop to shake their fists at us, and show their hatred of the invaders by spitting (a few months before, and they took more hostile methods of displaying their hatred, while ships had to go through the Canal with bulwarks protected by bags of sand). They save their powder and lead now, but are lavish with their curses as we pass by.

A long stretch of desert, with the impression about it which a soldier's account of a walk over it after Abu Klea

gave my mind. They were following up the track of the advance army, which was some weeks before them; and to all my queries as to description of the way or his sufferings, he could impart to me no definite idea, not having been impressed by anything, except the *taste* of the unburied dead, which loaded the air, and got down his throat, and stuck there for life. I seemed to want no more to see it all as I now saw it.

As we proceed on our way, I get a good sketch of distant Port Said, with the line of deep-coloured Canal verging from a point, tall banks of sand on either side, and a French ship waiting, behind us, in the foreground. It is our first stop, near the Ras-el-Ech village, with its large signal-staff and half-dozen houses. As I look back at the soft and tender spread of blue sea, with the lighthouse gleaming white, and forest of masts, I feel astonished to discover that I have been sketching a mirage, Port Said being too low-lying for me to see it at that point. However, it is a good semblance of Port Said, and therefore good enough for my purpose; it goes to prove how much like reality a mirage sometimes is.

We pass Lake Menzaleh, with the strips of sand on its margin crowded with bird-life—flamingoes, &c.—and looking like surf beating the sea-shore; streaks of sand, interlarded with grass strips, and with specks of prismatic colouring here and there over it; an Arab hut, with reclining and standing figures about; and in the green-and-blue Canal a buoy painted bright vermilion.

Groups of Arabs with white turbans, yellow, orange, blue, and red coverings; the females mantled with black veils, and the little children naked, having cast aside their faded rags to be the better able to run along abreast of us crying, 'Backsheesh.'

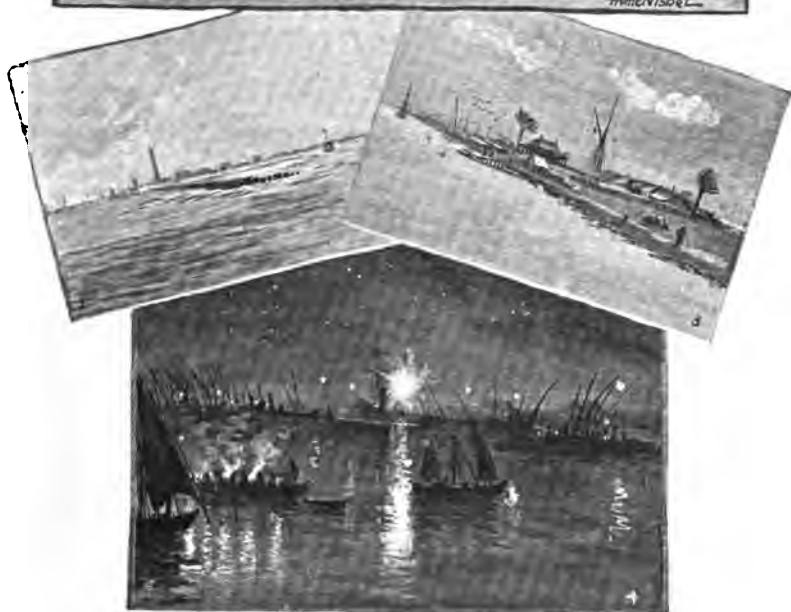
After many interruptions and rests by the way at the

different sidings, we bring to anchor at sundown at Kantara, twenty-five miles only from Port Said, and beside the old road still used by caravans to Syria and Jerusalem. We watch a fine sunset over the desert, with the last camels of a caravan being towed over in the ferry-boat, while the others, with their drivers, stand or kneel outside the courtyard of the desert caravansary, waiting patiently for their fodder. In the water, which is shallow at the banks, some Arab boys paddle and splash about, begging for half-piastres to be thrown in so that they might dive for them, and retorting, with ready wit and merry grin, to the jokes from those on board.

The utter unconsciousness of these boys and young men—for they range from the ages of eight to eighteen—is very refreshing, if at times a little embarrassing. One—a finely-developed youth of about seventeen—stands boldly up in the water, which reaches to the middle of his thighs, after having cast aside his only garment, facing the whole ship's company, and crying out for silver coins. They do not care much about diving for copper.

After sunset a solemn night steals upon us by swift degrees, with the half-moon shining softly over the desert, and the countless globes of mellow light beaming upon us from that great, sombre space. The mighty throbbings of the engines are silent; and this unaccustomed silence and lack of vibration gives to us the feeling of a void. It is difficult, after living upon a moving thing so long, to be able to feel at rest when it rests; the sense of abeyance weighs upon one like a depression, even although we are not without sounds all round.

The Arabs' distant chaunt at the caravansary reaches us at intervals when other sounds cease. The lights—three bright lamps, with a single reflection in the ripples—from the French troopship which follows in our wake pale the chaster lustre of the moon and stars. Their bands are



PORT SAID AND SUEZ CANAL

playing English and French airs alternately ; while in front of us lies a Turkish war-sloop, from the shadow of which come subdued clashings of cymbals. In the music-saloon they are playing upon the piano a dance-air, and on the after-poop, outside the saloon, the forms of the dancers pass and repass, blocking up continually the electric lights from the open windows, through which the piano-tones float. On deck, amidships, Arabs are crowding, with loads of fruit (oranges, dates, nuts, and raisins), while their dhows lie alongside—dark, indistinct figures, with sweeping robes, having gleams of direct colour where the lamplight strikes ; a mingled vision of shadow and half-toned lights, with touches of sharp definitions, and a mingled harmony of subdued discord, chastened by the mystery of night—piano, brass instruments, and strange voices.

CHAPTER IV

FROM KANTARA, IN SUEZ CANAL, TO SOCOTRA

Kantara—Sunrise over the Desert—Ballah Lakes and Villages—Timsah—Ismailia—Suez—Hills of Attáka—Afterglow over Sinai—Donkeys and Guides of Suez—Troubles of an Amateur Dragoman—The Red Sea—Mount Gharib—Jebel Teir—Twelve Apostles—Abyssinia—Bab-el-Mandeb—Gulf of Aden—Socotra.

Feb. 12th.—We wake up to a sunrise this morning which reconciles me to the dreariness of the desert :—a lemon-tinted, crystalline space, with saffron and violet-grey feather-streaks floating slantways, and birds crossing the clear portion, making, with their solid darkness, the feathery clouds grow soft and ærial. A rosy fume floats low down, and melts from the desert to the lemon-clearness—that enchanted sand-spread, which, in this hour of sunless glowing, takes on strange, illusive shapes of far-distant Pyramids, with level, sleeping lakes of lonely, shaded waters ; a monument of saffron, with lemon lustre, rose-blushings, and silver-grey, overlapping suggestions of amber, as shadow abides not on the earth. Then, while we look longingly, and watch the dark, fluttering wings of the flying birds, they seem to be dyed with bloodstains ; and while we are yet wondering at the sudden change from black to bright red, a straight shaft of golden light smites us between the eyelids, and forces us to turn aside, half-dazed, for the God of Day has risen.

To-day we are going on, without so many stoppages as we had yesterday, past the Ballah Lakes, El Ferdane and

El Guisp villages, with the high banks, mosque, and floating bridge, into the blue waters of Lake Timsah—where we get a view of the Khedive's Summer Palace—white-sailed dhows skimming its surface, and crowds of sea-birds rising above the red buoys, and circling about on the blue-grey sky; the yellow banks of sand whereon the Palace is built, and the lighter stone-tint upon the rounded mounds behind, against which the dark masts of our French follower appear, as it glides softly round the sand-point.

At Ismailia some of our soldier-friends leave us to join the army; after which we pass the Serapeum railway-station, with its ruins of monument, Persian and Egyptian relics, and on to the broad waters of the Great Bitter Lake, 'Amer,' with the Gèneffié range of mountains abruptly rising on the south-west.

The effect is ever changing as the day advances, when the Chebrewet Peak shows up purple-grey. The sky appears bleached, and the water green, with a brown strip of sand between, and the houses at the distant stations mere specks of white and red. Along the sandbanks, of a bright maize-tint, the sky is green, and the water like sapphires, with brown-madder sails of fishing-craft.

Through the Little Bitter Lake, and past Kabrette, Shalloufeh, and Madama, with a long afternoon of variety and hard work; and then, as we near Suez, with the sun setting over the hills of Attáka, and mark its line of masts, houses, spires, and the deep shadow of the hills beyond, with patches of dark sand and emerald-coloured, shining swamps between, before the rich spread of amber intervenes, we feel that our slow journey is about over, and that we are soon to drop anchor about the place where the Children of Israel made their marvellous passage from the land of bondage into the dreary wilderness.

The sun is out of sight, and wondrous afterglow

has begun to paint the western space with its prismatic combinations. Above floats a most romantic half-moon, like the Turkish ensign hung up aloft over old Egypt—the *Land of the Circle subordinate to the Crescent*; or like eternity curbed by time. The sky is saffron-coloured, with a constant pulsation of change, rose-coloured rays slanting up to the blue, which is gradually creeping downward, and becoming green and violet, with the rugged outlines of Attáka becoming duskier, more sharply defined, and flat against the opal-like clearness beyond. At the base of the mountains grey mists begin to gather, and the town is mainly distinguished by its lights.

Over towards Syria the hills of Sinai are rearing up against a mellow green sky, their harshness and barrenness softened in this hour of enchantment, for they look like blush-rose petals piled up one above another, with shadow sides of delicate mauve—mounds of roses reared upon golden-tinted sands, like those ripe fields of corn with the fame of which Joseph tempted down his brethren—and the land-swell of the Canal appearing like green marsh-grass.

Feb. 13th.—We only stay long enough at Suez to receive our letters. Last night we had to content ourselves with fishing for sharks, as the captain would not allow us to land in the dark, lest we might be murdered by the unfriendly Arabs, who take all chances that they can to molest the hated infidels; we caught one small shark, and gave him to the scedy-boys, by whom he was greatly relished.

However, what we did not succeed with last night we manage to accomplish at daybreak to-day. Getting into a dhow, we sailed ashore, much amused by the captain of it, who told us many funny lies about his wives and family, which I cannot now repeat. Then we rode the space between the sea-shore and the town on the donkeys of Suez, named after celebrities of England. I whipped up, and tumbled

twice from the patient back of the 'Bishop of London'; while my companions rode 'Mrs. Langtry' and 'Henry Irving.' Very good asses they all were, and justly worthy of the fame which they had won.

The donkey-drivers ran all the way, urging the talented beasts on, and encouraging them after the custom of the country. My driver being ambitious to attain to the rank of a dragoman, offered to show me the sights; and, anticipating some sport between the legitimate dragomans and this illegal usurper, I accepted him at once for a shilling extra over and above his donkey-fee, and rode triumphantly into town. Nor was I disappointed at the result.

We have only leisure to rush over the town, which, although small—having a mixed population of a little over 1,800 inhabitants, French, Arabs, Turks, Italians, &c.—well repays our visit, both historically and for its picturesque streets. Our extempore guide has a hard time of it with the host of regular dragomen: but he, being armed with our authority, held his own bravely through all the wild storm of foaming mouths, fearful oaths, and wrangling, while through this raging mob we calmly rode, our donkey-driver appearing and disappearing as he savagely fought his passage, with turban untwisted from his head, dress nearly torn in pieces, and matted beard clotted with white flecks. I never saw such a picture of excitement and insane fury in my life—all for the sake of a shilling; water-carriers, stall-keepers, goats and dogs, all joined in the *mêlée*, with shrill screamings and loud yelpings; a tossing confusion of legs, arms, and heads, with articles of *virtu* and food overturned, and mixing with the black mud, while our donkey kept on merrily up and down the narrow passages, with a maddened mob behind and around us.

At a butcher's stall we saw a gay young butcher whispering compliments in the veil-covered ear of a Moslem

woman, his hand on his heart ; while she listened with bent, concealed head, and with one brown, fly-swarming eye only visible, paying no heed to the infernal din of our advent. Near at hand, at a shoe-stall, sat a crosslegged Turk, surrounded by his red and yellow, pointed shoes, solemnly smoking his hubble-bubble. A crowd of women with heads covered and breasts exposed squatted on the ground, suckling babies, while half-naked children rolled about in the mud, with each eye-corner clustering with flies.

As our tidal wave advanced, breaking down all barriers, the woman caught my eye, and whispered something to the young butcher, who turned towards us, grinning from ear to ear, and showing his white teeth ; and even as he did so the mob swept over them, and scattered them in an instant—amorous butcher, veiled woman, smoking greybeard, nursing-mothers, and mud-daubed, fly-clustered children ; while we had an indistinct vision of brass pots, legs of mutton, pointed shoes, and writhing, screaming humanity, as we rode forward into the awning-spread shadow of the bazaar. We passed through Suez—with a fair display of wares for sale in narrow, highly-perfumed streets—and left behind us a confused mass of wreckage ; but our guide turned up before we had left the last building, not half so much damaged as we could have supposed, panting, to drive us back and claim his well-earned shilling.

We got back in good time to make some notes in outline of the scenery from where we are lying before they got up steam and weighed anchor : Suez from the sea, with its square, stone fronts, the mountains of Sinai low-lying beyond, dhows, coal-barges, steam-packets, and all the animation of the sea-birds, for ever on the wing in vast masses or detached groups.

The sea is of a luminous grey in the morning coolness, with gleaming white or richly-shaded brown sails, as the

little Arabian craft dart about over the broad surface from Suez to Jebel Attáka, and float from blue haze in the distance to pink, purple, and russet in the clear portions.

Jebel Attáka, or the Mountains of Deliverance, is conical-peaked, with deep ruts which show wild defiles, and sterile projections—a range of stony and treeless ranges, with nothing save rocks to shelter the weary wanderer from the blazing rays of the midday sun. Kolzoom, the Place of Destruction, it is fitted by Nature to be, although bathed this morning with such a rosy glamour: the trap where Pharaoh's hosts were slain, when they followed that bright column of fire through those deep, winding valleys, with the lurid reflection flickering over precipices, and dyeing with a dusky ruddiness that shifting patch upon the blackness of the upper sky; Pharaoh and his hosts gingerly winding their way, with their chariot-wheels jolting against the stones, and getting fast stuck in the deep crevices, lured on by that distant fire-gleam, but delayed by the accidents of the way, while the fugitives trod on lightly, with their booty on their backs, untrammelled by the hindrances of pomp.

I look towards those rose-coloured hills as I sketch, and seem to see that momentous journey from the banks of the Nile, over those mountains, and across the 'Sea of Sari' towards the plains which Sinai terminates—a short journey if you go straight—and pictures rise up of the stumblings of the infatuated Egyptians (a fatal line of march, little more disastrous than our own late British marches over nearly the same tracks), getting into the Valley of Chariots (Wady el Araba) by night, with cursing drivers and plunging horses, while the line behind is strewn with broken carriages, and the Pharaoh's astute foster-brother (who times his march to suit the tides) leads his gang of redeemed slaves safely through the danger by the light of that blazing column.

By 10.30 A.M. we are off on our way down the Gulf of Suez towards the Red Sea, leaving the Well of Moses, Tur, and Djebel Mousa for our return journey; past Mount Gharib, on the Egyptian side, rearing up 8,000 feet of bleak desolation; in sight of the Arabian coast, with its distant hills, and upon a cobalt sea, choppy with small, white-crested, curling waves.

Feb. 18th.—We have, after to-day, a long stretch of clear ocean before us, where, beyond sea and sky effects, with the ordinary ship incidents not worth remarking upon here, we have little to take note of likely to be of interest. We were fortunate in our passage down the Red Sea, with a head-wind keeping us comparatively cool; yet we are rapidly getting our summer clothes out, and the decks are becoming like a flower-garden with gay prints, muslin, and coloured lawn-jackets and the picturesque appearance of the coloured sailors, in their native summer costumes and with softly-gliding steps.

The Red Sea is dangerous to unwary vessels. We see traces of wrecks lining the shores—vessels cast by rough storms on to the coral reefs, and ruthlessly plundered by the robber tribes. I note Jebel Teir, a volcanic island with two peaks and sloping sides, very desolate. We pass it with a rough sea, and spray dashing over our bows. The Twelve Apostles, under a cloudy half-moon and swelshing waves, with foam-effects very lovely and silvery.

The Abyssinian mountains, rearing up 10,000 feet; Mocha, veiled with mist-wreaths, and piratical-looking craft hovering about; and through the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb (the Gate of Tears), rocky-peaked and dreary, with the island, lighthouse, and fortifications of Perim, where they say forty ships of the line could anchor with safety one hundred yards from shore, but, as seen under the boisterous wind and white, foam-broken blue and green waters, not a



SUEZ AND RED SEA, ETC.

very tempting spot to be near. Its shores are lined with the remains of wrecks, the hulls cast up, and bleaching like skulls, with bare masts sticking out of the waves.

We have got free of the Red Sea hot-blast, and the rugged purple and buff tinted Gate of Tears, and now are crossing the Gulf of Aden, and opposite the English-occupied Island of Socotra, a magnificent island from the artist's point of view, with huge mountains, bringing back to my mind the Grampians, rugged and diversified, although now softened by a hazy atmosphere with rich cloud forms and effects.

It is a pleasure to sail past the bold headlands, and look into the wooded valleys and hillsides, broken up by the majestic precipices; mighty rocks clothed with olive and tamarind trees, with the grand, massive outlines of Ras Haniff and Tamareda, and the rounded domes of the city of Manatoob, sheltered by the mighty background of rock and foliage.

The clouds are rolling, and changing every second, with deep and intense shadow sides and brilliant high lights, and with shafts of sunlight darting through the rent edges, and striking athwart the purple depths of the valley, gilding edges of buildings where it touches them, or lifting out masses of rock and yellow patches of sand.

An ocean, also, of variety, with sun-gleams rushing over, and lines of green, grey, and rich blue; a general dreamy feeling over it all of grey vapour, through which the eye penetrates to richest detail with a feeling of light and warmth. There are sails driving about like golden and bronze triangles, bearing the produce of the island—aloes, olives, and tamarinds. As yet Socotra is the most picturesque sight we have seen.

CHAPTER V

CEYLON

Colombo Harbour—Mount Lavina—Adam's Peak—Sketching under Difficulties—Gautama—Buddhist Procession—Road to Kandy—Mountain Scenery—Kandy Temples, &c.—Gardens of Peradina.

Feb. 24th.—After five days at sea we have dropped anchor at Colombo, where we may have a good spell ashore, and see what we can, while the coal-heavers have possession.

It is only at times that the chance occurs of seeing Adam's Peak from the sea ; or, rather, the mirage of it. For five minutes before sunrise, under certain effects, this mirage can be observed, like a faint mist lying in the east, over sixty miles away, inland ; and I was told to get up early, as the ship would enter the harbour about sunrise. I was almost late, but just caught it, and a fellow-passenger before me, trying to jot it down with colour—Adam's Peak as even the captain himself had seldom observed it before for distinctness.

I had intended only to draw it with pencil. As I had tumbled out of bed in a hurry, my painting materials were all down in my cabin, and I knew if I went for them that I would be too late, for even as I looked it was beginning to fade.

I dotted down my sketch and colours, and darted over to see how the amateur was getting on, with my hands tingling to get at his colours to catch that flying scene of loveliness.

He had begun—as amateurs will do—to work with the ponderous method which he had been taught at school, as if it were a cottage he was imitating, instead of this marvellous gradation of gold, rose-gleams, and purple. I felt constrained to help him if I could, for no man used to painting could stand passive, and see a colour-box at his hand, with a sheet of paper, and a slow bungler making a mess of an effect which the Divine Mistress had spread out for our benefit, for us to take, once in a lifetime, if we could. In my heart I cursed his stupidity and lack of knowledge as I watched him, for one swift second stumbling about; then nature became too much for me, and with, ‘Excuse me,’ I snatched his brush out of his weak paw, and was splashing away at his sketch with one hand, while with the other I kept him back from his own property, uttering, as I painted, a long string of incoherent apologies for my rudeness.

‘Ah!’ I have caught it but just in time; the sun’s disc peeps over the right-hand ridge near the sea, where it slopes down, while the left-hand corner is nearly dissolved; but the sugar-loaf peak is all right.

‘Thanks!’ said I, handing back the brush, without noticing his just indignation; ‘that is the way to do it when you are in a hurry. No, don’t touch it; leave it till it dries. Ah! d—— it, man! why did you do that?’

I was too late to stop that methodical paw, as he very carefully took his sponge; then my effect was in an instant ruined and wiped clean off, and he was once again pottering away in his own school-board fashion, while I turned, with a groan, to try to reproduce from memory what the fool had not the gumption to keep when he had it.

I do not think this gentleman liked me afterwards, any more than I admired him.

The breakwater, with lighthouse at the end, makes the subject of another sketch, as we steam up to and past it, to

our present position, white buildings with red tiles gleaming out from the morning haze, with fringes of palm and banana trees.

The harbour is crowded with catamarans, and little naked boys standing up, cracking their fingers to attract our attention, and offering to dive after annas—little Buddhists, with rich brown skins and shapely limbs, looking like girls, with their long, blue-black hair rolled up behind, and held together like chignons by tortoiseshell combs: lovely, gentle-faced boys, who look very innocent, yet are as full of 'cuteness as the American and Australian youth, for as one gets nearer the sun brains grow quicker, and, also, quickly decay.

Before going ashore we pass under the hands of the Cingalese tailor for a suit of pyjamas and thin day-clothes, which are promised to us next day.

We also change our English sovereigns into rupees, and some of us quickly melt these again into sapphires and rubies. In these transactions with the Colombo jewellers we find that, if there can be a degree of difference in guilt and duplicity drawn between the Brahmins, Mohamedans, and Buddhists, the followers of the Prophet carry the palm for dishonesty; the sons of Brahma come next, running a close race; while the disciples of Gautama are a shade better; although one must be a very close observer of human nature to draw the line of demarcation between them in rascality.

But they are all great believers in chance, with a wonderful trust in the honesty and credulity of the English: they are all quite ready for a game of toss-up, double or quits, when trading, and will give unlimited credit, trusting their gems for a simple I.O.U., without any other security, either to Australia or England, to be paid by order after the articles have been tested; and, as a rule, it is much

safer to do business this way, ready cash being rewarded, in nine cases out of ten, by pieces of cut glass.

We get into a catamaran, and are paddled ashore, the clear, bright-green waters of the harbour teeming with life, and bathed in brilliant sunshine : steamships, catamarans of all sizes, from the primitive, outriggered logs which the diving boys bestride, to the more complete, sailed fishing-craft and surf-boats, ferry-boats, and coal-barges crowded with natives, who swarm over everything, seeming, like summer flies, to breed in the heat spontaneously.

As we are paddled ashore, an anna pitched overboard will send one of the canoe-boys over the side in a twinkling, and before the coin has had time to sink many feet below the surface it is caught by him in his mouth, and up he pops triumphantly ; holding it on high, and grabbing his floating paddle, he strikes out rapidly, and overtakes us, swift as we are being propelled. A fine row from the ship's side to the wooden wharf, where we are welcomed by hosts of brown skins and gay costumes—white, bright yellow, variegated stripes, orange, red, brown, purple, and blue, in different stages of freshness and faded tones—making a very rich effect and contrast with the tawny sand of the streets, white and time-stained walls, deep-green creepers, overhanging trees, and dazzling sunshine. The heat being excessive in the open, we are glad to seek the shadow sides of the way, and keep to them as long as possible.

A pleasant place to idle in is this 'pearl-drop' of India, and altogether novel to the English eye, with its temples and palm-groves, its cinnamon-gardens, and ever-changing groupings of gentle-faced natives. I thought myself an adept at telling the difference between male and female until I landed at Colombo ; but now my ideas on the subject are vague and doubtful, for, like the lady who came here and took a maid, trusting to external appearance, I was for

ever making mistakes, and vowing that the men were women ; the only difference being that the men are more graceful and beautiful, having the least work to do, and dressing finer, while the women work in the fields, and look coarser.

Buddha, or Gautama Sakya Mouni, has always been one of my ideal heroes ; his self-sacrifice and moralities I have studied, and tried to comprehend, as I do the later teachings of our own moral Founder. The Christian philosopher must sympathise with and venerate the true believer of the 'enlightened one.' But in Ceylon, like in our own country, the spirit is very sadly overclouded by the form, while the ceremonies are of more importance, seemingly, than the creed ; so that I was disappointed in my ideal by the temples and shrines which I saw, even while gratified in my art sense by the display. Such carvings and signs of antiquity everywhere ; we see the records of more than twenty centuries, well preserved, at every turn.

As my visit was necessarily hasty, and my present object to get the voyage over, and once more renew old acquaintances in a newer world, I will not spend time now dwelling upon the creeds or historical objects of interest in this spicy island, but hurry over with the vague impressions of a couple of days spent in Colombo, the road to Mount Lavina, and from there to Kandy, the capital, where the sacred tooth of the philosopher of truth, loving-kindness, and self-abnegation, is enshrined under a golden bell, and smothered by precious stones. It does seem a grim mockery and reflection on the vanity of human aims and teachings, that the man who gave up a principedom and boundless wealth to preach and practice the preciousness of rags and poverty, should have the tooth which, I daresay, often troubled him sadly while alive, in spite of his philosophy,

so buried and preserved amongst the gold and gems which he so properly despised.

We take with us, as attendant, a young, half-naked Buddhist boy, who by no means despises the vile pelf, and who, but for his own assurance, we could not credit to be a disciple of this faith. He is a sad little blackguard, and from time to time imparts to us little confidences which somehow tend to disillusionise us as to the effects of this true and noble creed. But he amuses us with his merry ways, and shirks everything like work.

We hire a 'gharri' to do the first part of our journey, after seeing what we can at Colombo, and drive along a beautiful road for the seven miles to Mount Lavina, through native villages and cocoanut groves, along roads of red-coloured sand, meeting at every turn splendid groups of pedestrians and native, bullock-driven waggons.

A velvety blue haze hangs over the groves of palms and bananas, stealing between the ivory-tinted trunks and behind the layers of leaf-masses, sap-green and rich purple. As we pass the native houses, we see pictures at every revolution of the gharri's rusty wheel: the 'boutiques,' or stalls, where we see a wealth of colour in the form of fruit and vegetables, with metal pots and fancy ornaments hung up; shady places to sit in, and study natural history, as we observe many of the natives engaged in—the operated upon being very patient and sentimental-looking, and the operators delicate and active. They are a merciful lot, these Buddhists, and will not destroy life, however insignificant or annoying it may be to themselves or others; so that it is as well, perhaps, for the comfort of visitors, that the Brahmins and Mahomedans share the land with them.

Houses, thatched or tiled, and with walls of plastered mud, white- and yellow-washed over; lovely gardens to every cottage, with a roadway like the sanded walk of an immense

garden or conservatory at home; open shops, with tables laden with pine-apples, pumpkins, melons, bananas, mangoes, &c.; walls clustered with lichens and gay, spreading flowers; trees with scarlet flowers mixing and lighting up the drooping, light green and grey fronds or juicy background of leaves; haze rising from the red dust and wood-smoke floating through the forests; Buddhist priests walking in meditation, and yellow-serge-wrapt, with their acolytes carrying over their bare heads the oiled umbrellas; Hindoos with their shaved heads and white robes; Malays, Arabs, Tamils and Moors, more or less nude; bullock-carts coming along with white awnings, and the driver perched behind the shafts, while the little, hunchbacked bullock trudges along with more spirit and independence than bullocks often do in harness.

A conservative place is Ceylon, and filled with castes; yet we do not find any quarrelling or dissension amongst them. They trade and walk side by side, save the 'Rodiyas,' whom all men despise.

On the grey walls and ivory trunks we see the chameleon and other lizards. We pause to watch one or two, and notice the gradual change as they dart from shadow to sunshine, so as to make themselves invisible: on the grey walls they look grey, and on the ivory trunks of the palm-trees, stone-colour.

Talking of ivory, I am sorry to hear that the sacred tooth is only a piece of elephant's tusk after all. They say it is a large tooth, and no wonder; still, it is as good as the reality, and serves its purpose, as I fondly trust my white sapphires will when I once again reach home.

We descend from the gharri at Mount Lavina, and sit down to admire the lovely stretch of sea-coast before us, with the line of palm-trees and the rolling, emerald-green waves, which break white upon the rocks and sand, and

over which the surf-boats, with their white sails and standing figures, are rushing. It is a mighty rolling-in to make on this warm, peaceful day ; but the waves have a long stretch to do their running from before they reach that golden shore, with hardly a break until the final stop—so it is hardly to be wondered at if they come in foaming.

Palm-groves all the way along as far as we can see, both sides of us, whether we look towards Galle or Colombo, with delicious stretches of yellow sands, sienna-tinted paths through the lush-grass, and brightly-dressed figures making splashes of colour in the distance.

While we dot down our sketch, beside us squats, near the verandah of the hotel, a Hindoo juggler with his cobra and tree-trick, &c. ; an old man near by is trying to induce us to look at his wares, while his own attention is diverted by the tricks being performed. The old peddler is a Christian, and will not cheat more than a Buddhist. Inside the verandah a Brahmin merchant is doing a thriving trade with brass-ware and silk shawls, &c. ; he is a fat-faced, shaven-headed, unctuous-looking Hindoo, who rolls his brown eyes about the yellow whites, and cheats with the air of a parson. Some of our passengers are gathered round, and getting drawn in by his Oriental wiles ; and I am glad that we are dealing with Nature, for she gives us her wares without charge, and to the extent of our own carrying powers.

As my companions are making more elaborate sketches than I have been, I leave them working, while with my little fellow I go into the village to study what I can there. He has to do something this time ; or, at least, I try to give him an occupation, by handing over to his care my umbrella and sketching-stool ; and so we begin our tramp together.

He chatters on, and tells me many wonderful facts about

Buddhism, which go far to prove that my little friend knows nothing about his own religion beyond the broad principles of abstaining from flesh-food and preserving life when he can. Buddhist boys do not go after birds' nests, or tear the wings from flies, as Christian children are *not discouraged* from doing.

We are joined by one or two of his boy friends as we go on. I ask him if they are his sisters, for I cannot think of them as boys. I take notice, quietly, that my friend has divided his little burden into separate pieces, and that each of his friends carries a piece, he himself bearing the smallest and lightest article, to wit, my sketching-stool leather seat-top.

The friends of John Silva (my boy's name) multiply rapidly as we progress, until we are quite a crowd when I pause to gather my property together and make my first sketch since leaving the hotel.

Two Buddhist priests pass, oblivious of all externals, clad in yellow, with black, glazed umbrellas. The village temple stands a little way off, almost hidden by the trees in front. Little John Silva and his friends tell me there are five dancing girls inside the temple, if I will come and see it. They speak in the whispering, confidential tone of a Pandarus, which takes from me all desire to have any more of my illusions of Buddhism shattered.

As I sit down to sketch, the villagers come out to watch me, and crowd rather too close to be comfortable, cocoanut-oil in mass, with the knowledge of their universal mercy, not being pleasant. They are affable, but strong-scented, and made restless by the company which their charity bids them entertain and not molest. They laugh heartily when I make a joke, and crush the closer upon me, so that soon I cannot see my landscape for the brown barricade of bodies all round me; then I feel that I must shift to higher ground if I would get my task accomplished.

My Jewish friends pass by in their gharri, with loud cheers, which the natives about me return. I have only time to wave my hand to them as they disappear in a rolling cloud of fawn-coloured dust ; but they tell me afterwards that I look a comic sight in the midst of my three hundred admirers.

Seeing a wall near me where I can get above the heads of the crowd, I transfer my position to there, determined to make the most of my time while the light lasts. Already the air seems to be laden with golden particles, and the mellow rays are shooting between the trunks, and touching objects with detached patches, while the shadows are large and sombre, as I take my seat on the wall, with my legs dangling over a sea of dark faces, looking up solemn and open-mouthed, except when John Silva makes some funny remark.

It is working under difficulties at the best, and before long I discover that I have made a bad change ; for I have taken my seat near to the entrance of an ants'-nest, from which the alarmed colony emerge to resent my intrusion on their domain. I can see the advance of the enemy, and from of old know which must conquer at a close engagement ; so I point them out, and ask permission to kill.

'No ! No,' vehemently, from the crowd below, to my brutal request ; and I find, if I want popularity, I must be merciful and resign my ground, or become a victim. I therefore take a middle course, and with my handkerchief gently sweep the myriads, as they rush from their holes, down amongst the gaping multitude ; after which I can work in peace, while my admirers leap about in agony from stinging bites. Ants are difficult to shake off once they get a sure lodgment.

Night is coming on with very rapid strides before I get my work done, and mingle with the villagers, now joined

by the field-workers and night visitors (I can tell which are the women now, with their sturdy working-limbs and firm, protruding breasts), and walk slowly towards Colombo, looking anxiously behind for my friends with the gharri.

I am the more concerned as, now that the darkness is creeping on, the rabble are getting rougher in their treatment of me, pressing closer, with boisterous demonstration, and pushing me with loud demands for money. John Silva artfully tells me that I must give them money, or they may kill me now they have me alone; but although I do not believe the boy, or yield to their demands, it is with a feeling of relief that I hear the sound of rolling wheels, and shortly afterwards see my friends and the welcome gharri rush through the centre of a dust-cloud, through the parting masses, and pick me up, amidst wild howls and loud bursts of jeering laughter.

An interesting drive back to Colombo, through streets in twilight, past the lighted shops and bronze lamps, with mysterious figures gliding along in the obscurity.

We are met by a Buddhist procession—boys and men dancing along, with lanterns, torches, and fantastic costumes (some have grotesque masks on, and others are painted), playing on instruments of brass and beating drums. It is a Church festival they are celebrating with droll antics. Our gharri-driver tells us that this is the snake season, and night is the time when Ceylon snakes come out mostly; also about one very dangerous species, fierce and deadly, which is said to haunt the roadways, attacking passengers and chasing them. We look on the unconcerned crowds that perambulate the roads on foot, and do not believe him, yet feel a slight shrinking sensation when our hand comes accidentally against the iron bars of the gharri, and keep a sharp look-out for dark, ribbon-like objects about the sand; but we do not see any during our drive.

The after-glow is dyeing the western space with waves of gold, ruby, and sapphire, as we drive past the lake near Colombo—a wealth of rich colour, which is repeated in the smooth water along with the reflections from the masses of tropical foliage along the banks ; then, as it fades out to a green pallor, the moon above shines out, and lights the sides of walls and clear portions of the streets with silver lustre, leaving black mysteries of shadow where not broken up by the richly-coloured lanterns and orange lights from the bronze lamps in the native shops and stalls.

We dine at the Grand Oriental, and meet many of our friends, some of whom have returned from Kandy with glowing accounts of the magnificent mountain scenery *en route*, making us resolve, if we can manage it, to visit that City of the Kings. Fortunately for us, the captain, coming ashore for a few moments, informs us that he will not sail before Friday midday ; so that we determine to risk it to-morrow morning.

A rare mingling of nationalities there is in this vast dining-room : passengers from the different vessels in harbour ; gentlemen from up-country, Cingalese and Portuguese, Dutch, French, Germans, Indians, Japanese, Russians ; with the coffee-planters, and coffee-coloured attendants gliding about like priests of Egyptian temples, and, overhead, the capacious awnings being swung by punkah-boys.

A gorgeous dining-room, with glittering tables, lighted up by numerous silver candelabra, and glass-ware, and decorated with huge clusters of fruit and flowers ; while along with the buzz of conversation in different languages blend the monodrone of clouds of mosquitoes.

But the dinner is not equal to the display—badly cooked, and most unsatisfying after the ‘ Parramatta ’ bill of fare ; and the charges are exorbitant, both for meat and drink.

For a John Collins—a drink largely patronised here—

they charge a rupee. The cigars are abominable, and there is no abatement in price; but the waiters are most polite and servile, even while they remain firm to the principles of the island.

They export tea largely now, which seems likely to supersede coffee; but although I heard much in England of the excellency of Ceylon tea, I could not get a cup of it here. They drink the Chinese brew, and import what they use themselves.

Some of the male passengers went out in the evening to see the Nautch girls dancing, while others interviewed Arabi Pasha; but not being interested either in the Eastern dancers or the Egyptian leader, who is winding up his adventurous career, like Buffalo Bill, as a showman, we preferred to pass the evening amongst the trading-stalls and moonlit streets until bedtime.

Feb. 25th.—After a night of lively revival of old times with the mosquitoes, and a better breakfast than we had dinner last night, we caught the early-morning train to Kandy.

My boy, John Silva, seemingly awake all night, met us at the hotel-door, and ran after us, along the misty streets, to the station. He was disappointed that we left such a useful person as he behind, and told us he could not think how we would be able to see the place without him; however, we said that we would try to manage, for that day at least, and got on all right, in spite of his friendly warning that they were great rogues at Kandy.

On past the lake we went at a mild pace, seeing the bullocks wading about up to the neck, and munching at the reeds which overran the surface; along by the side of swamps where men and women seemed to be fishing, also up nearly to the neck; past pineapple gardens and paddy terraces, through groves of banana and cotton trees, and

waste places where the grasses grew rank, and fell about, uncut, on all sides, like rain-beaten, unripe cornfields—places where the cobra and python might lie concealed, and breed with safety, or the cheetah wait for sundown ; seeing cottages, and cottagers with their large families, at every turn of our winding way ; stopping at stations prettily decorated with flowers, where men and boys came to vend their rice-cakes and sweetmeats—stations with long, sounding titles, such as Maradana, Henaratgodo, Veyangodo, Ambipussa, Polgahawela, Rambukkana, and Kadugannawa ; past the Kalanya River, with its margin of reeds and lilies ; along between hedgerows of convolvulus, and flowers yellow, white, blue, and red ; along the flats, mist-covered—the cream-tinted mist which hangs over tropical swamps, carries malaria, and is the sign of a broiling day.

The railway-carriages are pretty comfortable, and run smoothly ; the fires of the engine are fed with wood logs, the fumes from which smell nicer than our coal-fumes when passing through mountain cuttings, and in long tunnels.

After a time we leave the plains, and begin our stiff ascent over and through the hills.

Then I did not regret that I had made up my mind to see Kandy, or feel the train going too slow, for I wished we could crawl along those ridges which we were surmounting, or could divide myself, so as to look out both sides of the carriage at once, as the magnificent scenery burst from the mists rolling upwards from the valleys.

Every mile we were going higher ; no going down to rise again, or along flat levels. From the first ascent, right on to Kandy, it is a steep rise, up which the engines snort and struggle ; with the occasional rest at wayside stations, the air getting colder and the distance clearer as we advance.

Past coffee and tea plantations, with the plants growing on the steep hillsides; rice ridges placed, layer above layer, up the mountains, filled with water, and overflowing with constantly-running streams, through which the saturated rice-reeds were beginning to appear; terraces with moats dug out to catch the rains, and mountain torrents; glistening ridges, fringed with bright, sprouting green.

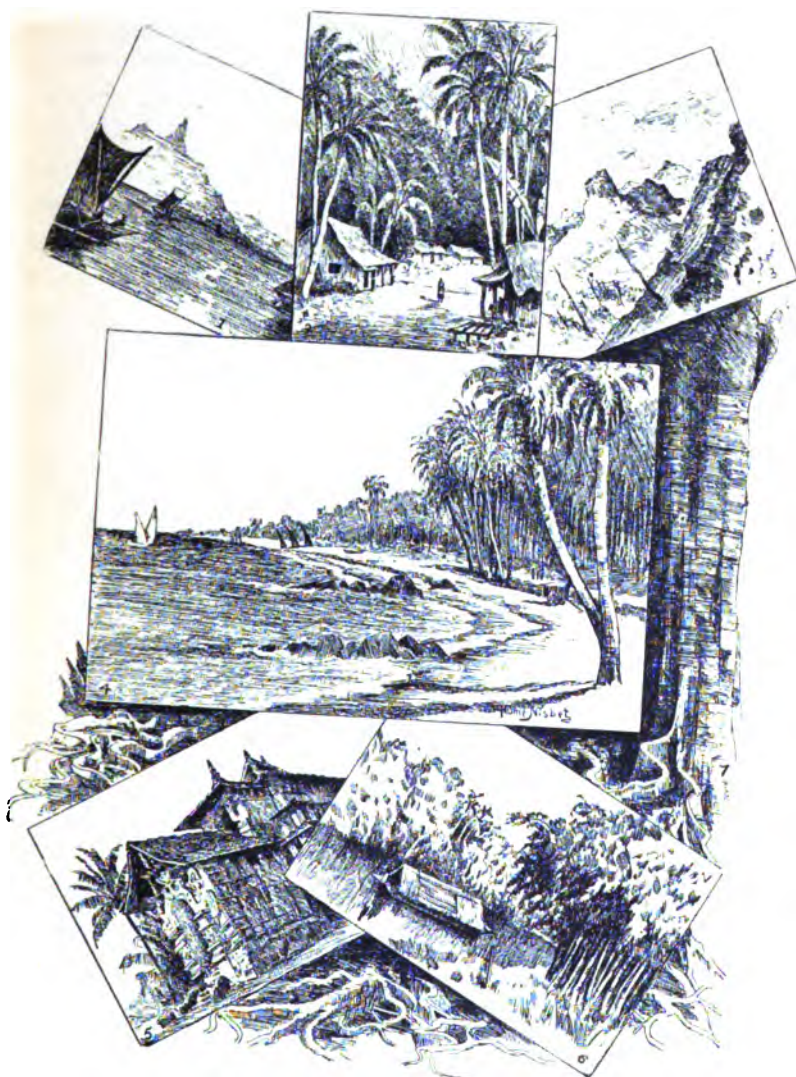
Precipices over which waterfalls plunge, and gullies half-hidden with tropical foliage and flowers; with long stretches of cultivated valleys, flanked by mighty boulders, and terminating in rugged, far-distant, blue mountains, about which the mists wreathed and dissolved, making every moment changes of form.

A train journey, to enjoy which I had rather have missed my passage than foregone, now that I knew what it was. I never saw more stupendous rocks, or such a variety of effects in the time—rocks like castles perched on green hill-tops, or starting out of the sides of valleys in strange forms and abruptness. The colouring, also, could not be surpassed, or the marvellous changes which the sun-pierced vapours produced.

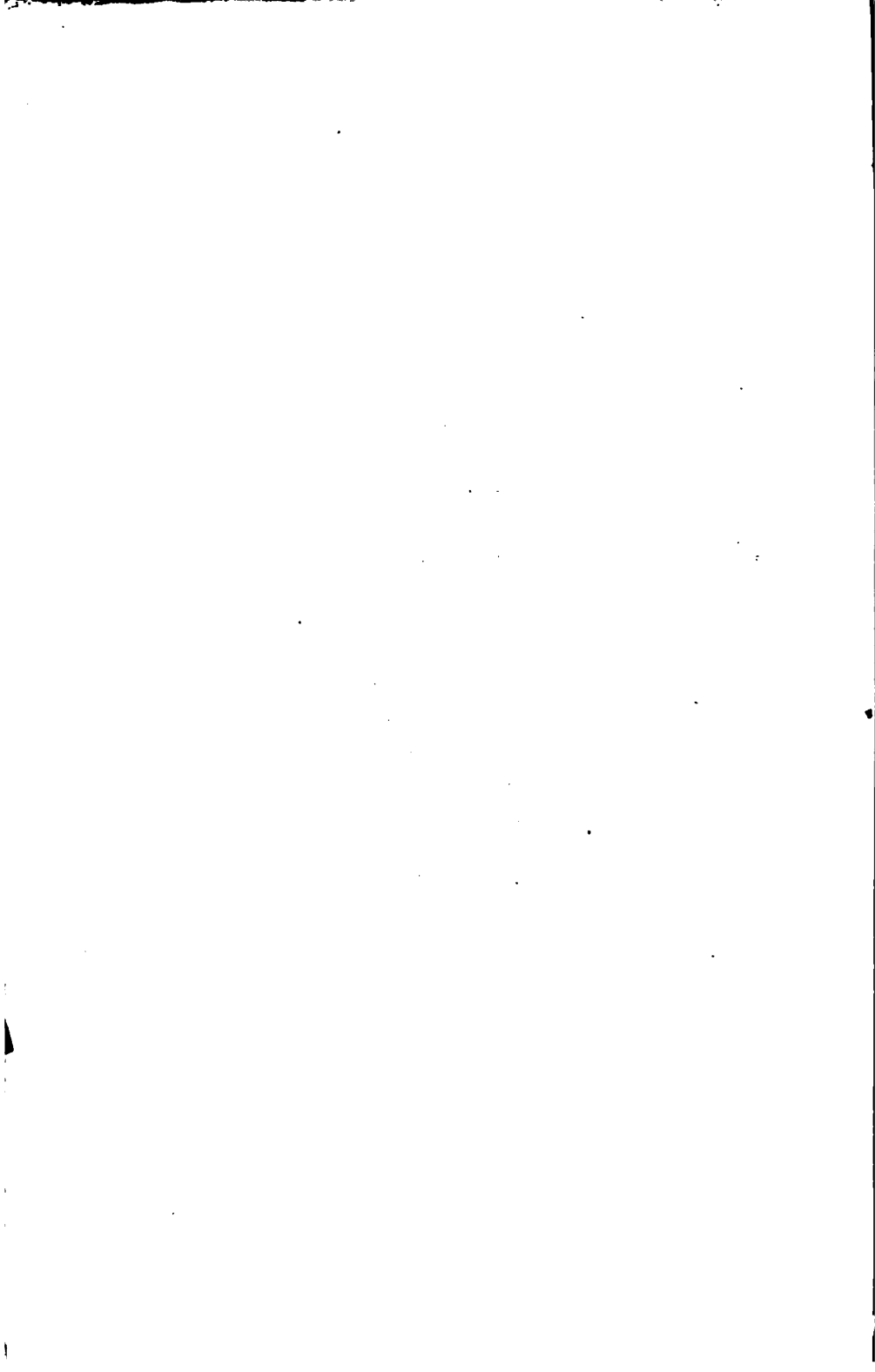
We arrive at Kandy all too quickly, even although the treat of variety and grandeur will be repeated on our return journey: we have also seen the real Adam's Peak, as we saw the mirage yesterday; although, with the morbid taste of my kind, I prefer the sham to the reality.

It is at Kandy that one begins to forget Europe for the first time, with that forty miles of mountain between us and the sea, even in spite of the few British soldiers whom one meets occasionally about the streets.

We have been rising over and through mountains for the past four hours, but the line still continues to rise and cut after leaving Kandy, with scenery getting grander and wilder for many a mile further; but we have reached the



CEYLON



heart of the island, and our hours are limited, so we must rest content with what we can see, and carry from here, the principal place in Ceylon.

We are in a city of antiquity, temples, and palaces, historically twenty-four hundred and twenty-nine years old, since it was conquered by Wijago from the ancient owners, the 'veddahs,' who now inhabit the woods, untamable.

We have no time to pause for tiffin at the hotel, but rush off to view the Eastern streets and see the ancient temple, or Dagoba, the 'Dalada' or 'Maligawa,' which stands at the top of Colombo Street, and was reared for the repose of that sacred 'tooth' which has now been replaced by the bit of elephant-ivory.

Maligawa, the temple, stands near the banks of the miniature lake which the ancient kings created to beautify their chosen capital. No pains have been spared to embellish the time-worn stones of this venerable building: a balustrade surrounds it, richly carved, and embossed with relief-work, while even the steps and flagstones are cut into rich scrolls; indeed, it is so much covered with ornament that the eye is apt to lose its beauty and significance in its multiplicity.

Inside, the vestibules and corridors have the same scroll and embossed work everywhere—on the ceilings, floors, walls, pillars, and doors. Where the Dalada is at the altar one sees a gigantic figure of the squatting Buddha, with hands laid over the upturned soles of the feet, and with palms open and flat. He is surrounded by symbols of the Virtues, while two upright figures support him; and behind are kept the seven locked covers of the Dalada, each key kept by a different priest, who is held responsible for the safety of his own bejewelled cover. The relic is inside the innermost cover or casket.

There are flowers upon the altar, and leaves from the

bo-tree, or pippul—the still-flourishing stump of which stands in the courtyard—planted some time during the reign of King Devinipiatissa, two thousand years ago. I got one of the relics from this ancient tree.

There is much of interest to be seen in the old streets of Kandy: the Palace of the Kings, the Library, and other temples and places of worship devoted to Buddha, Brahma, and Mahomet; the Lake, with its pillars and posts of carved stone; stalls where precious stones, carved silver and brass work, mats, illuminated scrolls, chatties, and other articles of ornament or utility, are on view. We glance at all this as we pass, and at the jewellers and other workers carving their wares in the sight of all who like to look, with the mixed crowd of coloured races moving about or standing in groups; then we walk off to finish the daylight in the most famous gardens of the world—Peradenia.

Botanic public gardens are much alike all over the world—straight or winding walks, nicely trimmed and carefully kept—so that it is only to those botanically inclined that the separate interest lies; but when the traveller once takes his fill of the gardens of Peradenia, all other public gardens seem to be weak imitations.

There is nothing under cover here, but all free to the air and sun—ebony, satinwood, calamanchi, cinnamon, betel, bamboo giant trees; the banyan, and india-rubber with its milky juice oozing out wherever pricked; flower-bearing trees and sugar-canes; the bo-tree in its young state, the areca-nut and talipot palm; gorgeous-plumaged birds of great variety; butterflies, like birds, of every hue; and, in the long-grass thickets, the large and small snakes with which the island is infested.

It is night when we get back; and what a night!—golden stars above and glittering fireflies below, seen in full per-

fection before the moon rises : such a night-walk as one who has never been out of England could not realise, no matter how vividly described.

After dinner we are lured into the native shops, more by the romantic, Arabian-Nights-like appearance of them than from any desire to purchase ; yet we are drawn on to buy, whether we will or not.

Most of our purchases are made by the game of guess—one rupee against ten for moonstone brooches, cheetah-skins, butterflies in boxes, chased daggers, and images of Buddha or Brahma carved in brass.

We hold the coin in our hands, and the dealer guesses heads or tails ; if he is correct in his guess, we lose our ten rupees ; if wrong, we get the article for one.

Whether he wins or loses he is courteous and composed, being Eastern ; when we win we chuckle, when we lose we get excited and blasphemous, being Western.

I begin to notice, after one or two trials, that I win oftener with the believers in Brahma than I do with the followers of Buddha ; also, that before the latter ventures upon a guess he always rests his hand lightly over mine. He does not care to venture a guess unless he does this ; and when I insist upon hands off, he nearly always loses—that is, in the case of touching, the game is reduced to a certainty on his side, while in the other case it is clearly chance, and nothing more.

This interests me psychologically more than the articles won or lost, and I begin to wonder if my Oriental is a thought-reader ; for, of course, I know which side is uppermost in my closed hand.

It is a quaint scene, this little lamp-lighted Eastern shop, with its picturesque wares ranged out, the eager, dark faces of the onlookers, and we pale-faces, in our white

clothes and pith helmets, playing the game of hazard with those tawny shopkeepers.

And when we retire that night, after counting what we have spent, and overlooking our purchases, we do not consider that we have been much cheated by the natives of Kandy.

CHAPTER VI

AT SEA

The Doldrums—Incidents on Board—Cape Leeuwin—First Sight of Australia.

Feb. 28th.—Crossed the Line last night, and are now passing through the doldrums. Weather hot, moist, and uncomfortable, and rain pouring constantly, as it nearly always does in this quarter of the globe.

We have been hitherto, without exception, a pleasant company on board—that is, we were up to leaving Suez—and, what is unusual on board ship during a long voyage, without a single case of discord or bickering. But in the long space of time before us, until we sight land after leaving Colombo, it is hardly to be expected that this genial feeling can keep up; livers get out of order with the want of proper exercise, and the lavish fare which the P. and O. Company provide: also, as I have observed, the passengers booking at London get into such a confidential condition with one another, that they are apt to look upon later arrivals as intruders within their home-circles, so that one is inclined to pity the late-comers.

At Suez the first break occurs, and, also, the first batch of strangers join us; people departing whose absence leaves a singular blank considering our short intimacy, and others taking their place who do not seem to be able to fill up the void left.

I have already said how much I enjoy the society of Australians when travelling ; and, with very few exceptions, our Suez additions are all Australians going home—some half-dozen. This party I can fairly divide into the class whom I get on with, and the exceptions to the broad rule of pleasant company ; and as they both operated a little on my immediate future, I may as well linger for a short time to speak about them while in this limp latitude, which in old days, before condensing machines, used to be looked forward to for the replenishing of the sailors' casks.

A young Jewish lady going home to be married belongs to the Suez additions ; a native of Sydney, who becomes a universal favourite before we are well into the Red Sea, and is straightway admitted to the inner circle, with her free and merry ways.

An Australian squatter going out to look after his stations. He is a Scotchman by birth, a keen reader of character, and educated highly—a man not easily imposed upon, as any one might see by his bright blue eyes. I congratulate myself that he takes to me after a night's tussle of argument in the smoke-room, and becomes my friend for the rest of the voyage.

The third is a member of the Treasury of Victoria, quiet in manner, and seemingly apathetic ; yet, under his stolid manner of receiving people and remarks lurks a vast amount of native wit and astute appreciation of humour. We also become great friends, and afterwards I am much indebted to him for information and aid in my colonial work. Both gentlemen bear out fully the Australian character for warm-heartedness and hospitality.

The exceptions come next, and I am sorry to write anything which may appear disparaging about them for three good reasons :—

Firstly, I had made up my mind beforehand, from memories of the past, to receive nothing but hearty welcome and encouragement from the makers of the Colonies.

Secondly, they belong to that sex which we generally like to think of as ladies.

Thirdly, they were all natives of that portion of the land where some of my happiest days have been passed, and which my heart warms to as it does to my own birth-place—to wit, Victoria.

But, after all, what is the use of heeding three bad potatoes out of a cartload of good ones?

A mother and her two daughters travelling homeward after doing the Grand Tour.

Through the interposition of my bad familiar spirit, it so chanced that this evil-disposed party of three were placed opposite to me at meal-times; so that it was not possible for me to get out of their reach, had I been inclined, without making a talk on board, which I did not choose to do, as I have hitherto fancied I could agree with any one—unless, of course, I was tied to them for life.

How the one-sided feud began I never could understand, much as I have tried. The first look I had of them was of a pert, beady-black-eyed, thin-lipped young female, the incarnation of undeveloped bad temper, with a mother who had developed her faculties in that direction, and who bore a striking resemblance to her daughter, only that her black hair was plastered down each side of her forehead as we are apt to see caricatures of revivalist saints; and on the other side a diminutive figure with the affectations of a girl, a wearied air when in repose, and a general dryness, which suggested to some of the frivolous young men on board the title of ‘Bombay Duck,’ which they afterwards used when speaking about her in the smoke-room.

We were not very many hours inflicted with their com-

pany before we heard that they had been presented to Her Majesty while in England—an unexpected honour, which, apparently, had completely upset their weak little heads.

What with their arrogance, affectation of fine airs and superiority, and little traits of malignant spite, a couple of days sufficed to put them into Coventry by the disgusted passengers, who united in snubbing them as they properly deserved, and as all bad-tempered pretenders ought to be treated.

All excepting myself—for from the first I yielded to my instincts, and kept from interfering with them in any way; therefore, for this, I suppose, I was rewarded by their united and special hatred and open insults.

How little we know, when walking along a street, self-absorbed, how busy we may be making mortal enemies all round. My friend from whom I so rudely snatched the brush at Colombo had a reason to dislike me; therefore I could not blame him if he did so. But with these fair daughters of sunny Austral, whom I was ever ready to endure for the sake of their country, and whose land I was going now on a love-mission to, it was altogether different: they owed me kindness and courtesy, if they owed me anything.

The mother, I think, had got over her vivacity of insolence and vulgarity, and toned down with age only to malignity. But the youngest daughter was sprightly to the extreme, and pitched her bombshells about without much regard to aim; so that I, being directly opposite to her seat, came in for most of the worst-aimed ones, the little, elder sister simpering foolishly, or looking wearied and dried up, during those passages in which her lively and ladylike sister distinguished herself.

How often have I sighed, and wished audibly for some male appendage to that Court-presented party when this maiden became extra aggressive, while I was forced by man-

hood to appear quiet, and smile as if I did not comprehend her. She must have thought me a very stolid and thick-skinned person from the manner of her compliments.

I am indebted to her for teaching me to smile and look composed under any circumstances when it is not in one's power to resent the affront. I smiled through all the faults which she found with my style of eating walnuts without salt, strawberries with pepper, ham with jelly, and my personal habits of attiring myself, with the hundred-and-one feminine ways she took of proving to all the ship's company that I was not a person to her taste, and made no rejoinder whatever, so that I think now I am qualified to smile at any mortal insult delivered by the weaker sex.

'Why do you always wish that my brother was on board?' this young person asked me one day on deck; at which question the other passengers laughed, as if she had made, for the first time, a genial joke.

'Because I would like to meet him,' I replied, gravely, shifting my position so as to get away from the siren.

On another occasion, in the music-saloon while I was speaking to a young Australian lady about some friends of mine who lived in the Colonies, this delightful specimen of refinement broke in upon our conversation (I did not know of her vicinity, so that the interruption was unexpected) by asking me, in a very loud voice, intended to be offensive:—

'Pray, what relationship are those people to you?'

I regarded her for a moment, and then decided that it was my duty to her sex, if not to her, to reply.

'No direct blood relatives of mine, Miss — ; but they are connections, for all that.'

'Ah! I thought they could be no relatives of yours, as they are my friends!'

'Indeed!' I remarked, slowly, as this thunderbolt fell

on all the astonished ears. Then, turning to the sister and mother, I said: 'You have great cause to be proud of your sister, madam; and you of your daughter;' and, bowing to them both, I left the saloon, to compose myself with a smoke.

I would not have mentioned these trifling incidents of a sea voyage, except to show that it is not all dullness, even in the doldrums; or elevated such insignificant personages by taking notice of them more than I have done of the agreeable incidents of the voyages, only that their reasonless animosity did not terminate on board ship, but followed me up, with the settled resolution of a nobler purpose, through the Colonies, where I heard of their sentiments and calumnies as I progressed, and even over the ocean again to old England, where one might have supposed that the rankest rancour might have lost its sting. Remarks which they made on board to other passengers, with criticisms on my abilities, which they had no opportunity of knowing, which echoed back to me, and over which I only laughed, they reduced to writing to friends in the colonies and to my employers at home. But, as I said before, three rotten potatoes in a cartload are nothing, and one can well put up with three enemies, even although they are females, when they have won a thousand friends.

Between the showers the cloud-effects are very beautiful in this region of perpetual rain (I have often wondered what it is on shore in these latitudes—the wet skies which border the blazing Line). We see bulging, purple-shaded cumulus clouds piled up, one weighing down another, like heavy snow avalanches, with green intersections, or, it may be, rainbows gilding up the dark sides, while over the water lies a white sheen.

In the morning we have a dawn-effect of Indian yellow and white, with purple clouds, the surface of the ocean oily,

and in long, heaving swellings, taking on broad, decided, square, prismatic touches of yellow, green, red, blue, and silver-white, with the dark masses of cloud-sides dripping straight with long reflections down the waves.

At sunset the thundery masses gather blacker and more densely, with a fierce orange sun in a broken confusion of dun and crimson; while against the sun, in the eastern quarter, are to be seen motionless forms of chubby cherubs lying on eider-down pillows, dyed of a rosy hue, with purple sides against a bright, green background; motionless clouds which take on an after-brightness without a seeming cause, growing strangely brilliant and ghastly white as daylight fades from the sky behind them—a dead calm without a breath of air about, and swelteringly hot, like a vapour-bath.

March 8th.—Between reading hard and overlooking sketches, also vainly trying to develop some photographic plates, which the heat of the tropics spoil, the days have been got rid of in the Indian Ocean, and we are looking forward to sight the land to-morrow.

I feel, as I always do before beginning a new work, most horribly depressed and uncertain. On the map Australasia appears so little to get over; but I have been there before, and know well the difficulties of the ground: and the time I have committed myself to do it in—fifty sketches ready for the engraver per month, along with my extra MS. (so many pages of descriptive matter to go along with the sketches), the journeys, picking up information, purchasing photos, besides taking them, and arranging other matters—it appears a fearsome task I have undertaken in these short nine months the nearer I approach to those 3,030,771 square miles out of the nine months' burden of 3,169,389 square miles. However, I must just brace up for it, and squeeze as much juice from the speeding months

as mortal man can. Farewell to sleep and calm repose after to-day, until I can cry 'It is finished!'

March 9th.—Sighted Cape Leeuwin at twelve o'clock. A splendid day, with sunny clouds over a cerulean sky, and deep, blue-green, white crested waves dancing past; breezy, and just cool enough to be bracing.

Cape Leeuwin, low-lying and hazy, the first point of Western Australia! On the taffrail we all lean and watch it, my friend Ida, the Jewish bride-elect, talking very fast to keep back the moisture which will come to her grey eyes (she was not long before she had to borrow my handkerchief, her own not being handy, to wipe up those rebel tears). Even the beady-black eyes of my enemy seemed to twinkle and snap with a kind of emotion which softened me greatly towards her as she sees her native land loom up in the far-off distance, with the tiny puffs of white vapour here and there which denote bush-fires, and which at night sparkle out over the waters like friendly beacons.

What all were feeling who claimed this land as their birthright, I also felt as I look with strange yearning and melancholy thrillings towards it. We have passed through storms and threatening skies as if safely at home looking out of a window; witnessed startling phenomena of cloud-forms and wave-shapes, waterspouts boiling and curling upwards to meet the down-reaching clouds, clouds stretching down spiral feelers to touch the whirling waves; sun-rises soft and rosy-like with the fresh clearness of little children, sunsets grand and gloomy, like spent, gorgeously-apparelled armies—and now they will soon be things of the past, like the friendships which end with the journey, and the pitiful hatreds which live too long.

Australia the mighty, land of the free, where a man may lift up his head and date time from his own exertions; where the right hand of labour grants a nobler patent of

nobility than ever did the bloody sword of usurpation and wrong in olden days ; where that southern constellation, the Cross, looks down upon a greater Crusade than ever knight made his vows to—the grand crusade of brotherhood and independence ! Australia, the young giant who advances with such mighty strides before all the decaying nations of the time-worn world—I look toward you, and all the blood in me tingles to begin my work.

CHAPTER VII

ALBANY

Albany and King George Sound—A Boorish Reception—Qualifications of a Settler—Secret of Colonial Success—Incidents in the Early Life of a Squatter.

I HAVE, in the voyage out, kept a regular account of the points of interest day by day, for the direct purpose of letting readers who may follow my footsteps know exactly when to look out for the places; but there is no necessity of doing so any longer, as it is a matter of choice, or convenience, how he may continue the rest of his journeyings—that is, after he shakes himself free of the punctuality of the mail steamships: therefore I drop the diary form with relief to myself, and, I doubt not, with equal pleasure to the reader, and after this will go on, stop, turn aside or back, as I feel inclined, without regard to time.

A balmy morning when we steam through King George Sound, and drop anchor inside the Princess Royal Harbour, with the pretty town of Albany lying in front of us, upon the shores of as lovely a bay as one could wish to look at.

During the night we have been passing Flinders Bay, Black Point, Donelly, Warren, and Bowles rivers, Point d'Entrecasteaux, with Mount Mitchell and the Bennet Ranges, the shores lighted up here and there with bush-fires, and by daybreak have sighted Break-sea Island and lighthouse at the entrance to the sound; fine bold headlands

on all sides of us, Baldhead Point, with parts bare, brown, and sterile-looking, showing out in strong relief amongst the local colouring of olive-green scrub, yellow-tinted rocks, white sandhills, and green and purple waters.

There is a striking resemblance to the Bay of Naples in this port of Albany, even although the houses are startlingly colonial; it is in the general arrangement of buildings and contour of the land that the idea takes hold of us of having seen it all before: an Antipodean Naples, which is cleaner, and which fulfils more sanitary laws, while having surroundings which satisfy the artistic sense as completely, waters as sunny, sands whiter, roadways warmer-tinted, and a general air of repose and peace which catches the mind, and gives to it the desire to go no farther, but settle down at once, and begin to plant our vines.

Not a passenger stays aboard, for we are all eager to touch this land; a small steam-launch waits alongside to take passengers, while another is under way from the wharf to bear off all that this one cannot carry.

The boatmen have none of the obsequiousness of the boatmen of other ports which we have touched at on our journey; they are colonial and independent, and name their price with a gruff take-it-or-leave-it manner. One tall, young, sun-dried importation, whose duty it is to help with the ropes and gangways, plants himself in the direct way of everyone, and will not budge from his post to oblige the passengers coming down the ladder; they must go round him, and take awkward leaps to get to the deck, while he lowers upon them a sullen eye. At a glance one can see that he has only been a year or two in the land of the free—just long enough to get the fat melted from his bones, and not long enough to get used to his surroundings.

He is trying hard to get rid of his country boorishness and home-bred discontent and servility, but he still remem-

bers the rinds of bacon which he has been used to chew, and his fathers before him ; he can hardly resist hanging his loutish head and touching his hat to the quality, and in his efforts to resist the engrained habits of centuries he runs into the opposite extreme, and behaves himself like the freckle-faced, pig-headed, unlicked cub that he is.

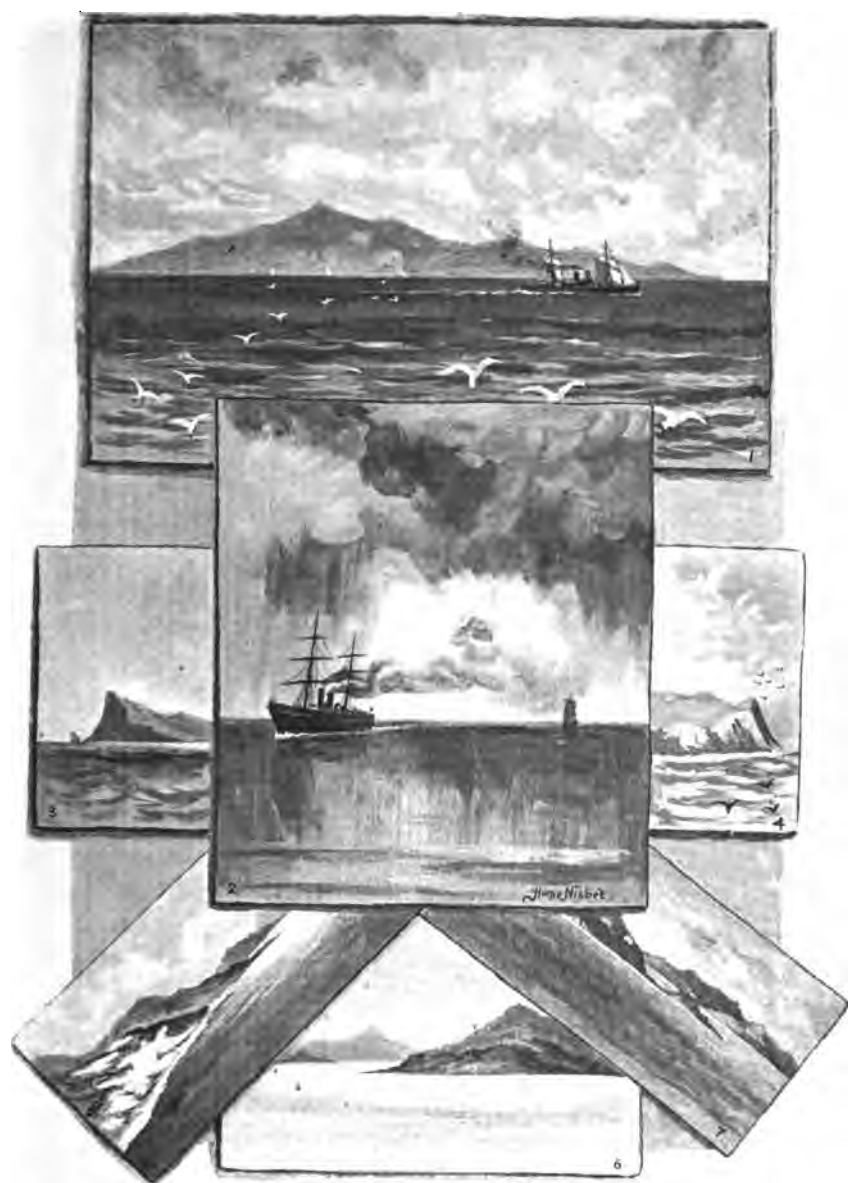
The engineer and fireman are both old hands, and look bright, bluff and cheery as they bustle about. I feel aggressive as I look at this gaunt young man, soothed again as I turn towards them.

Two of the ladies coming down have had narrow escapes of falling into the sun-lighted waves in their efforts to get past this dogged representative of the half-colonised John Bull, who neither will move aside nor proffer a hand. I am a little behind the ladies, and one of the gentlemen who spring forward and save them from the ducking. There is only one way of treating him that he can understand, and that is to jerk him aside.

I therefore put my shoulder to the task, and land him against the gunwale without protest or apology ; independence is what he aims at, and this is the only way in which he can understand it : the best bully to the centre of the walk. When he picks himself out of the coil of rope over which he has stumbled he glares for a moment, as if he intends to fight, but seemingly thinks upon a better method of revenge, for he only growls out a purely Saxon oath, and stands aside, with the rope-end in his dirty paws.

It is a side glance which warns me of his intentions, and former experience of his village-kind, so I wait with patience for what I expect to come.

We are all aboard, and puffing away, Mount Possession in front overlying the pretty township, and a delicious sky overhead ; I take out my sketch-book to make some rapid pencil-notes of the wharf, &c., towards which we are veering.



WESTERN AUSTRALIA, ETC.

‘Look out what you are doing, lout!’ cries my companion, the New South Wales advocate, as we near the shore.

The young man had carelessly thrown over me a coil of the rope which he meant to throw ashore, and it was now lying about my legs.

‘Don’t bother,’ said I; ‘I’ll be all right. I say, my fine fellow, are you a good swimmer?’

‘No!’ growls out the sulky boatman; ‘I never tried.’

‘Then I’m afraid you’ll have to try in another moment, if you don’t take that rope from my legs at once.’

‘Get out of the way then!’ he snarls.

‘Don’t hurry,’ I remark, putting up my book; ‘only, if you attempt to throw that rope, over you go.’

I gripped him firmly with both hands, ready for the fling, when the ex-chawbacon thought better of it. With the humility of former days, he uncoiled the pretty trap he had prepared, and went about his duty with a better style.

I never met a boy or man who had been ten years in the colony behave like this; but it takes nearly eight years to lick a true-born, country-bred, pork-fed new chum into proper colonial shape.

It was a fortunate thing that the purely Saxon element on board the ‘Parramatta’ was decidedly in the minority on that voyage out; those few we had all grown friendly with (with the exception of that one Court-presented family), and were able to enjoy and shorten the days at sea. There was much laughing and talking amongst us as we went along the wharf, through the streets, and up the sides of Mount Possession, the only point of interest to visitors for the short time at their disposal.

A hot day, even for Western Australia, yet so pure and lung-inspiring an atmosphere that the stiff climb hardly affected the most delicate of our party.

Halfway up we paused to look at the long champaign which spread before us towards Perth. We could see the coach-road, like a ruddy line, until it became lost in extreme distance: a spreading country, in colour and tone resembling the stretches of Surrey—salt marshes, mostly dried, with here and there a silver glitter of water, and, beyond, a fine range of hazy, blue mountains, lying across the horizon.

Another stiff climb over rocks, and through bushes of eucalyptus, and we reach the top, and can rest, and feast our eyes upon the magnificent panorama that lies beneath us—a panorama of water, sands, islands, and headlands which could not be surpassed, and only rarely equalled: King George Sound and the ocean beyond, to the south-west; that long spread of fen-land, with the bush-fires, to the north-east; and the township and sparkling bay to the south.

The water is intensely blue, save where the shallow parts make it green, like an emerald fringe against the dazzling, snow-white sands; nowhere else have I ever seen sands so exceedingly white. The near islands and headlands are olive-green, with interspaces of yellow sandstone, grey quartz, and russet-tinted, deposited rocks; while the more distant lands swim in vapour-like, velvety folds.

Western Australia has had, hitherto, rather a languishing existence, and owes what bounds towards prosperity it has made to the convict importations in the first instance, afterwards to the gold-fields, and at present to the yearly increasing value of its pearl-oyster beds; but it has a great future before it as the future sanatorium of different parts of the world. Invalids from India can here recruit; it is also handy for England and many other parts. The climate is perfect, and the health-conditions all which could be desired; while, as far as its agricultural and pastoral qualities are concerned, no other part, excepting, perhaps, the western

districts of Victoria, can equal it throughout the entire continent.

In extent it is eighty times larger than Great Britain—i.e., in English square miles, 1,060,000, or 678,400,000 acres. Where the soil is good it can grow anything, and in great abundance, in the shape of grain, fruit, and vegetables; it is, in fact, like the land which Moses led the Children of Israel within sight of, and saw only himself, a land of plenty waiting upon the possessors.

A country for a man who longs for a calm, passionless existence to go and rest in after he has clutched enough from the world to permit him to let it go; the El Dorado of the fever-wearied, where echoes from Pall Mall will not come too quickly to disturb repose; where a man who has a moderate competence may retire, and become a philosopher without being a cynic, if he has only money enough to buy muscles and sinews. Land can be bought by any one here. Then he may come here and dream a dream of perfect peace, with the vines and orchards and crops springing up about him, with the health-giving air bringing a second youth, while the years roll back, and comfort comes by insensible but rapid strides.

The land, also, for the strong man with the young family, who is not above taking up his load and struggling patiently—that is, who can be content to sell his sinews and years for the other man's gold; but both must combine, and work together—the small capitalist and the stalwart labourer. It only keeps a new country back if labour comes alone; and gold-seeking and pearl-diving are not sufficient.

Let the emigrant who has money have enough to be able to lay out without returns for ten years, and the emigrant who has none have the patience and perseverance of Jacob, and both will die wealthy men. Nature everywhere is a stern mistress to woo, whether to the painter, the poet,

or the colonist. The first years will be years of disappointment to all—hard times, hard lines—for she does not yield easily: the irresolute or dissolute fall away, and become paupers and incumbrancers of the earth; it is only the self-sacrificing who will succeed.

I know a man, a south of Scotland native, and the son of a farmer.

He came of a good old yeoman stock, who had tilled land in bleak Scotland for centuries—that is, struggled against fate to keep up an honest name.

The father of this young man became security for a friend (they don't do that sort of thing often nowadays), and the friend left him in the lurch (as friends will do), the consequence being, that he died leaving his family almost destitute, yet without worldly reproach, for he had enough to pay his debts.

The sons went different ways to seek fortune; but it is the fortune of the second son I want you to follow.

He was lucky enough to be able to borrow a small sum of money—enough to pay his passage out to Australia, with just a little left after he got there.

He had a stern Caledonian spirit of his own, and left Scotland with the idea that until he could refund that borrowed money he was not a free man.

He landed in Melbourne in the early days, when it was just beginning its glorious career—a few houses put up, and the lines planned out for the future grand streets.

There wasn't much to see in the place then, so he didn't waste his time, but took a job straight away, putting what cash he had brought into the bank; it was as general hand on a station, and, as he had a good practical knowledge of cattle, he managed to make himself useful to his master in buying and selling.

He stayed two or three years with his first master, pay-

ing out of his wages his debt first, and afterwards laying the rest of his earnings in the bank, all the while gaining colonial experience, and looking about him at his odd times of leisure.

He did not let his money lie quite idle either, but when he saw a chance, while purchasing cattle for his master, he bought and sold on his own account; lucky in his guesses, or, rather, gifted with foresight, he knew just when to buy and when to sell.

In his employer's interest and his own he made several trips to New Zealand, and, as he said himself, felt tempted to purchase land there, but resisted, as he was growing attached to Victoria; so that he contented himself with buying or selling cattle.

So it went on year by year, his bank account growing while he waited on his chance.

The time came when cattle went down so low in price that they could be had for almost nothing. It was one of the depressions of a young colony: no one wanted to buy—perhaps it was a time of drought—everyone wished to sell.

My friend drew all his money out, and spent it on cattle, having faith in the rise, which came almost immediately—perhaps an unexpected rain, which only a clear-headed Border-man could foresee.

When he next sold his sheep and cattle he had laid the foundation of his fortune, and could afford to look out for himself.

The Governments of new colonies always hold out inducements for settlers to take up land as far away from the centres as possible—they want the country to be opened up.

My friend went to look for land one hundred and fifty miles from Melbourne, right into the Western District, at that time a wild scrub, with only swarms of blacks to dispute it.

He fixed upon his site, and bought what he could afford to buy right away. This was a standing principle of his—only to take what he could afford to pay for on the nail.

The ground which he fixed upon was, without exception, the finest soil throughout Victoria, although at the time so densely covered with scrub that it meant the labour of a Hercules to reclaim it.

Chance again helping him, as with the sheep? No; he had studied geology, farm-chemistry, and botany at home, as well as farm-work and cattle, and so knew exactly what he wanted, and was able to recognise it at a glance when he saw it before him.

A man possessed of patience, perseverance, restraint, and knowledge—those were the qualities which brought fortune to him; he could wait for what he wanted, and work while waiting.

I do not think that I ever realised the full grandness of any story of heroic effort so vividly before, as I did when I heard this old Scotch squatter relate a few of the events of his early struggles in the Colonies. He spoke in terse sentences, relating mighty feats (that to me eclipsed those great actions of the past which we are apt to regard as ancient myths) as incidents by the way, not worthy of more than a passing allusion.

I had read of the work of the Romans in their British road-making, of Hannibal leading his army over the Alps, of the march of the 'Ten Thousand,' and the daily twenty-mile running exercise of the soldiers of Old Egypt before breakfast, and regarded them as quite simple feats after I had listened to the early hardships of this Australian prince.

He had taken me up the sides of a mountain belonging to his estate, and while resting, halfway up, on a spot which he indicated as a good place to sit and gather breath, he related in a few sentences his tale.

We could look over the western plains for forty miles—a beautiful prairie of rolling grass. From the top of that mount you could see the distant ranges, ninety miles away, so clear was the atmosphere.

Thirty-five years ago his estate had been densely covered with scrub and ti-tree—all to be cleared away before any profit could be had from the land.

Lavish Nature struggled against him to retard his progress; a couple of years, if left alone, would choke up the cleared ground. Natives in whole tribes came to dispute the ground, and had to be propitiated and kept at bay; snakes, dingoes, and cattle going astray, with escaped convicts and bushrangers to guard against constantly day and night.

As he could not afford horses, he did his work of clearing with bullocks. Once a year he made a pilgrimage to Melbourne or Geelong to buy his year's provisions, through a trackless country beset with a thousand dangers to a dray so laden.

He had at first only a little bark hut, and was compelled to turn his cattle loose every night, and trust in Providence to find them in the early morning.

Any one who knows the nature of bullocks must be aware that they will wander miles, seeking for food, between sunset and sunrise.

Where his first hut was raised lay about five miles from the mountains, and in order to track his team he had as the leader a snow-white bullock, so that where he went the others were sure to follow; and it was by the aid of this white one that he knew where to find the others.

Every morning at daybreak, before beginning his work for the day, he had to trudge through these five miles of bush, and climb this mountain to where we then sat. From this spot he was able to overlook the country, and see the

white spot of his leader amongst the dark scrub ; and then he knew where they were.

Sometimes they would be between him and the mountain upon which he stood ; but sometimes they were ten, or even more miles distant, on the other side of the hut.

This, of course, meant ten miles from his clearing, and back again, with that stiff hill climb, if he was fortunate, and twenty, or even thirty, miles if they had wandered, before he could begin the labours of the day.

‘How it all came I know not,’ he finished up his tale by saying. ‘I often wonder, even to this day, how my fortune grew ; but it did, year after year getting larger, until I am as you see.’

One of my fellow-passengers had informed me that this gentleman, whom he knew intimately, could drop his two hundred thousand and not miss it—one of the soundest men in the flourishing colony.

So much for cattle and land, for this successful colonist had never allowed himself to be tempted by the gold-fever, which had brought so many other squatters into the clutches of mortgage companies. He had never stretched his hand farther than he could safely reach, and never stepped from the ground which he had once found to be firm under his feet.

CHAPTER VIII

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Mortality of Sheep—The Rabbit and Sparrow Plagues—A Run through Adelaide—Landing in Melbourne—A Tragic Idyll.

THESE were only a few of the early troubles of the colonist : there were seasons of drought, when the sheep died by tens of thousands, and the unhappy owners could only look on with impotent pity, while all the grassless sheep-runs were strewn with grizzly skeletons, and starving mothers stood over their perishing lambs, helplessly glaring on the brazen heavens with glazing eyes—a pitiful and heartrending sight, which may be prevented in time, as science advances.

Then came the sentimentalists who introduced the rabbit and the sparrow, and lived to witness the curses which they brought upon the land, and be execrated by their fellows ; sentiment is such a deadly quality when it has not common sense to back it up.

How these rabbits and sparrows multiplied ! My friend, the squatter, told me that he has seen as many as ten hundred thousand rabbits sitting teaching their young how best to demolish the land. At one time, in the crater of this mountain, there was no keeping them under. He had spent over a hundred thousand pounds trying to exterminate them, and still they were plentiful on all sides. He tried cats ; but even they grew surfeited on rabbit, and became

domiciled in the warrens, and, in some instances, contracted marriages with the tribe, producing a strange mongrel breed, with the habits and instincts of both finely balanced. With a strong body of rabbit-hunters he was just able to keep headway against them; but it was only by waging unrelaxing warfare, and with constant and vast expenses, that this was managed. Verily, the life of an Australian squatter is not all honey or the storing up of riches.

It was with great regret that I was forced to leave Albany so soon. I should have liked to have missed a mail, and taken the next steamship, for it is one of the most ideal places to live in any one could desire who longs for a quiet life; however, one consolation I had, and that was that I should see it once more after my work was done. I felt so high-spirited and generous-minded as we returned from Mount Possession, that I thought I could easily forgive my worst enemy; indeed, it was with great difficulty that I resisted the impulse to embrace our disagreeable and thin-lipped passenger as I met her near the Post Office, contenting myself instead by shaking her warmly by both hands, in spite of her frowns, and inviting her to join our party in a shandy-gaff. I told her that it was impossible to bear malice on such a day and in such a climate, and I felt gratified to see the thin lips somewhat relax, for she was Australian born, and proud of her great land; so that before she could quite recover her lost dignity we had pledged each other in the effervescing cup, and I felt how magical a climate Australia must be to work such wonders. After this the lion and the lamb may sit down together, and Scripture be fulfilled.

We all grow very quiet and sentimental on board as we near the end of our journey; those who use the pipe or cigarette fill up and light often. A general unrest pervades

the smoke-room and saloon, and the hours seem to drag. We have to say 'Good-bye,' and it is astonishing how painful a word it is to say, considering how short a time we have known each other.

At last the moment has arrived. We have seen Glenelg, and the handsome city of Adelaide, with its carefully-kept Botanic Gardens and fine background of mountain ranges, and dropped a great number of our friends, who mean to stay there, or else go overland by train to Melbourne, while we go on by sea to Port Phillip.

It has been a dry season at Glenelg, and everywhere the country looks parched and dusty. Yet it is a pleasant seaport place, like a little Margate, only ever so much cleaner and newer looking, with the blue waters breaking gently against the white sands, the grey ranges behind, and the Capital resting brightly in mid-distance. We get some of the finest grapes which we have ever tasted in our lives here, which go far to counteract the effects of the pecks of fine dust which we are forced to swallow in our inland walk.

Adelaide has been so much described and praised by some of the passengers that I felt almost satisfied to take all its perfections for granted—the grandeur of Mount Lofty in sunshine, or when enveloped in clouds, as it towers beyond the city its 2,800 feet in air; the fertility of the plains; the beauty of the fine streets and well-built houses and mansions; the thriving appearance of the inhabitants: I have to grant all, and feel that no one dare grumble either at the arrangement or position of South Australia's chief town; it is all that the heart can desire. But we are too near to the end of our ocean-journey to be able to do it full justice, or pay much attention to its many perfections. We rush over the Gardens, post letters at the Post Office, look into the Torrens River, loaf about the streets in an

aimless fashion, and once more get under way for the city of the south—Melbourne.

It is a lovely morning when we steam into Port Phillip—one of those white mornings when everything is luminous, yet softly defined, with quick, silver lights and dove-wing shadows.

First the Heads, with the lighthouses leading the way in ; then the forty miles of lake-like waters, with the distant shores spreading out, then past vessels of all kinds going out or coming in, for Port Phillip is always busy ; then the approach to Sandridge and Williamstown, with the forests of tapering masts between us and the great city, which has been rebuilt three times within the past fifty years, and which has spread itself out like Aladdin's palace ; then the rattling of chains as the anchors are dropped at the wharf, and we are scattered, vowing all sorts of vows of fidelity and friendships which few of us ever afterwards have a chance of renewing.

It is fully fifteen years since I last landed at Williamstown, and but for the uniformity of the streets of Melbourne, the familiar Post Office and unfinished pile at the top of Bourke Street, it is completely changed.

That pile, the Houses of Parliament, appears to be, however, just as it was when I last saw it. The scaffolding grown a little greyer with the years, hiding what the workmen are doing behind it, is an old friend which makes the changes round me appear the more startling. I feel warmed up as I look on the planks and tracery of poles and supports ; old memories of funny and tragic incidents crowd back, as if they had occurred only yesterday ; old hopes, aspirations, romances and disappointments, so that I touch the boards lovingly and wonder if, when next I come, they will be still there to greet me on landing, or will the vast building be finished, and the net-

work taken away and destroyed like so many of my other fancies.

I remember one night long ago standing here and thinking over the problem of next day's dinner, while I leisurely puffed at the vile weed which my last coppers had procured me. It was close upon eight o'clock, and the twilight was fast closing in over the city—a rich twilight of purple and gold.

Already the lamps were lighted, and I could see the city spread out like a big chessboard. By the way, the buildings must be much higher now, for in those days I could look over a wide extent of crossing streets marked out brightly with the lamps. Now I can only look down Bourke Street.

As I smoked, and pondered upon this important social problem, I noticed two outlines a little way from me, dark against the violet duskiness beyond—two men, with billycock hats, standing opposite one another, and smoking cigars, also with their heads turned towards the town clock. I don't know how they came to attract my attention particularly, for they were merely clasping hands as if about to part, while with their disengaged hands they touched one another on the foreheads. Perhaps it was this rather eccentric method of parting which attracted me.

It was just on the stroke of eight, I could see by a side glance at the glowing clock-face; yet what a long time it seemed to be before the first stroke sounded, and with what a curious anxiety I waited and listened.

'One' at last rang out, and as I listened for the second peal, a loud report of pistols drowned its sound, while the figures became slightly obscured by blue smoke.

I saw them stand still for a second while the smoke rolled from them, and then both slid gently to the ground. I ran forward with some other passers-by to see what was the matter.

There we found them face upwards, their hands still tightly clasped and just a little space between them, with the disengaged hands spread outside, and in each hand—a smoking revolver.

They were both dead, simultaneously shot through their heads, their hats only fallen off as they fell, two tiny rivulets of blood trickling down over their eyes, and half-bitten through, but still firmly clenched between their set teeth, the partly-consumed cigars ; that seemed the only life about them when we reached them, for the revolvers had ceased to fume—two thin wreaths of silvery smoke curling softly upwards from the vermilion ends of their cigars, through the purple muddle of distant buildings, getting lost in the saffron hues of the dying day.

This was their novel method of committing suicide, of which I had unconsciously acted as a witness. I found out all about them afterwards : they were two friends, who had been at the diggings together, and being lucky, had come down to Melbourne to enjoy themselves. Here they had fallen in love with a barmaid, who, however, had given neither of them the slightest encouragement.

This was their one bar of discord in a long and warm colonial friendship. They liked each other too well to part company, and they loved the woman too frantically, either to be able to give her up altogether, or yield her even for friendship ; so that, instead of tossing up which should go and try his fortune first, after a long time of indecision they arrived at the mad conclusion to die in the way they had done. Before dying, however, they went to a photographer's and had their likenesses taken in the position in which I first saw them ; they had just posted this carte, with letters of farewell, to the fascinating but fatal barmaid, bequeathing to her all their possessions, before coming up to watch the clock.

An idyll of the early days of gold-digging! the sardonic part of all being that the barmaid had a lover of her own, whom she made happy by marrying shortly afterwards on the strength of the fortune which the two hapless young diggers had left her.

CHAPTER IX

MELBOURNE

Fashionable Melbourne—Robert Russell—Old Melbourne—Free Library—A Spoilt Epic—Floods—My Old 'Coach.'

It is well-nigh impossible, as one walks about Melbourne of to-day, to realise that it can be so young, and that there are men still alive who saw it as the happy hunting-grounds of the aboriginal, without a hut standing—a wild and uncleared bush.

What a mighty and magnificent city it is, in its modern regularity ! Bourke Street, big and little ; Collins Street, where the fashionable people parade on a Saturday morning ' doing the block,' where you will see women whose equals for physical beauty, stature, and grace of carriage are nowhere else to be seen in the world ; they all look goddesses as they glide along—Greek ideals, who have only discarded the simplicity of costume for the more gorgeous creations of Paris and her prince of dressmakers. Collins Street, round by Mullen's Library, on a Saturday forenoon, is a moving phantasmagoria of colour and loveliness, with a crowd of faultlessly-attired, eye-glassed exquisites thrown in by way of relief to the almost overpowering brilliancy of the feminine division. The sun shines brightly, the combinations of fashionable tones commingle and cast soft shadows on the clean pavement. Columned and frescoed buildings rear high above them, with wide stretches of street. The densest crowd

must always appear dwarfed in the vast spaces of those roomy streets. The shop-windows far surpass those of London and Paris for magnitude and display.

As we stroll about inhaling the delicate perfumes from the floating draperies, gazing upon the beautiful and refined faces, we wonder if these super-refined and languid affectations—these cigarette-smoking and eye-beglazed woman-hunters, can be the descendants of the Spartan and rugged makers of this mighty land. It is a hard matter to find space, even in these wide spaces, for a thought of the black-fellows and the wilds of fifty years ago.

I spent a day and night looking over the sights of Melbourne, and listening to the reminiscences of one of the original surveyors who planned it out as a future *probable* site for a township, but who, at the time he planned it out, did it for an amusement while waiting on orders from Sydney, without enough belief in his own idea to purchase any of the ground at a time when he might have had acres of it for a few shillings.

Robert Russell still lives at Richmond, one of the suburbs, far from being a wealthy man, getting his living by sketching portions of the city which might have been his own, if he had only been 'cute enough fifty years ago.

'I look upon it as my own,' he observed, airily; for he is a cheerful old man. 'I saw it born, and have watched it grow up.'

He showed me his old sketches, and generously gave me permission to use any of them I might fancy. We went into the Free Library together. What a wonderful library that is, and how many a happy day I have spent in it long ago!

I think there is no Free Library anywhere in the civilised world like it. One may be able to find more volumes in the British Museum, but not one-tenth of the seclusion or

comfort for readers that there is in the Melbourne Free Library.

You pass through a cool hall with exhibition rooms about, up a wide staircase, at the foot of which will be found soap, water, and towels for those who desire to wash their hands or cool them when they are hot. Upstairs is the Library, a long apartment with galleries round it, and leather-covered tables and chairs ranged about the centre. A delicious perfume of morocco leather pervades the place. Not too much light to distract the reader. It is all quiet, subdued and comfortable, as any student's room should be.

But it is in the recesses, which line the great room, that rest and comfort are to be found to the fullest extent. Each recess is devoted to its own school or country, and is provided with tables and chairs, all leather-covered. Through these recesses I have flitted when tired of my book, getting acquainted with all nationalities: Hindoo, Chinese, Japanese, &c., students who sat in their own divisions, and who could just comprehend enough English to exchange ideas on the best of their authors for those of ours. I have read to them the finest passages of the authors I liked best, while they translated the wisdom of theirs to me. So I learned from the disciples and worshippers themselves all the beauties of their different religions, poets, and historians, and to venerate Vishnu, Brahma, Buddha, and Confucius, as well as the mythology of my own countrymen.

I was very young at this time, and one of my ambitions was to write an epic on Lord Nelson and his noble actions; so I came here to learn all that books could teach me about him. After devouring the English laudations I went into the French, Spanish and Italian departments, and got their writers of the period translated. I think that I would have been much happier if I had gone no further than John Bull's version. I could then have set to work and glorified

my brave hero; as it was, I drew a line between the different accounts, and entitled my doggerel 'Carracioli.' I had not reckoned upon that skeleton when I dreamt of my conception, neither did I take into consideration the fascinating Emma Hamilton; but after my dive below the surface I found that they both filled up the foreground, with a pale thin ghost behind called 'Nelson.' The poem was a failure, and I am glad of it.

My friend Russell and I had a discussion on the city young men who were so prominent in the stalls of theatres, bar-rooms, Gunter's, and on 'the block.' He said:—

'No, don't take these as specimens of our young colonials; these are mostly loafers from the old country, or lads not yet fledged. You must go into the bush to see what our sons and daughters are like: there the work is done; here they come to amuse themselves. One thing you may rely upon, the real boys soon get tired of this tomfooling and weak imitation of West-End Londonism, and go back to help their fathers and brothers all the better for their hour of folly. The confirmed fools die young here, so that the colonies are none the worse for them. Our motto is "Advance Australia," and we never turn our backs on that for dead or dying traditions.'

I felt comforted at these words, for my recollections of the men of fifteen years before coincided with his opinions.

It was on October 5, 1836, that Robert Russell and his assistants arrived at Port Phillip by the brig 'Stirlingshire.' He had been instructed to survey the shores of Port Phillip Bay, and ascertain the breadth, width, and navigable capabilities of the river Yarra. While doing this work he made a plan of the future city of Melbourne, marking out the streets as they now stand.

The Wawoorong, Boonoorong and Wantourong tribes

occupied the land at this time, but they had sold their rights to Batman a year before, when he had landed and corroborated with the native women and children, and afterwards, in consideration of blankets, looking-glasses, tomahawks, beads, scissors, &c., the men of the tribes granted to him and his heirs for ever 600,000 acres of their land—the site of Melbourne. He did not get this grant sanctioned by his Government, so that his gifts of beads and looking-glasses must be looked upon as deeds of benevolence. However, if he did not get the land, the Government gave him the looking after it by appointing him to the post of District Constable, in 1837.

To give an idea how the population increased in this new city I need only quote statistics. On August 15, 1835, Port Phillip had a population of 14 souls; the census taken in 1881 gave the population at 860,000.

At the time Russell made his plan of the future city there were one or two huts and some canvas tents standing. Most of his sketches are dated 1837, one of them, which is called 'Melbourne from the Yarra Falls,' showing three or four rough wood huts surrounded by fences, and a few tents—that to the right being the surveyor's, Mr. F. R. D'Arcy. The two huts in the centre belong to the enterprising Fawcner, who, in spite of the efforts of the original Batman, was busy cultivating his eighty acres of land. He started the first Victorian paper, which he called the *Melbourne Advertiser*, and opened the first institution of civilisation—a public-house; it was two years afterwards that the church came on the field. In the left-hand corner stand Hall's tents, and behind these are Smith's huts.

The Commandant's house at the time was a very rough shed, standing between Spencer and King Streets, with, behind it, the tents of the first Governor—Sir Richard Bourke.

This was Melbourne in the years 1836-7—a few primitive huts on Batman's Hill, scattered widely apart. To be particular, Melbourne—or, as it was then called, 'Bear-grass'—comprised 13 buildings, viz., 3 weatherboard, 2 slate, and 8 turf huts. The present area of the city is fully 7 square miles, the principal streets being over a mile in length and 99 feet in width, metalled and flagged a good 100 miles, and with nearly 2,000 gas lamps, and over 80 newspapers and magazines—a pretty considerable increase in half a century.

It would take up a large volume in itself to relate all the adventures which these early citizens had with blacks and bushrangers. The blacks were patriotic enough to continue hostile to the invaders until they were finally exterminated; the latter were always cropping up—escaped convicts from Sydney and Tasmania, some of the Dick Turpin type, others cowardly and bloodthirsty, but all great nuisances, yet serving to prove what stuff these plucky and reckless pioneers were made from. Still things went on, and land rapidly rose in value.

There is a legend that the ground in Bourke Street where the Post Office stands, and which is now valued at 1,000*l.* per square foot, was purchased by a sailor for a gallon of rum and some pounds of tobacco. This sailor got his deeds made out properly, sailed away, and has not been heard about since; perhaps he lit his pipe with them; but if not, what a colossal fortune waits upon his heirs, if he left any, and they ever fall across these lightly-won title-deeds.

Three allotments of ground, about half an acre each, situated in Collins Street, were purchased at the first Government land sale on June 1, 1837, by Chas. H. Ebdon, for 136*l.*, and sold again publicly by auction for 10,224*l.*, on September 14, 1839.

Fifteen years ago they had open gutters in Melbourne, which looked very picturesque with their foot-bridges over them, and as a fairly constant stream of water ran down them, they had a cooling effect when seen on a dry summer day ; but they had their disadvantages as well as dangers, so they have been altered to underground sewerage. I do not think this improvement has added to the healthiness of the city, but I suppose it had to be done.

Sometimes, when the rains came on, it was next to impossible to cross the streets, owing to the torrents which poured down the gutters and covered even the raised bridges. Once I saw a man drowned in Bourke Street. The bridges were submerged, and he made a wrong step, and before he could recover himself, he was swept under the bridge, jammed inside, and choked before the passengers were able to extricate him. This happened in the crowded street during the afternoon, and was not, I believe, a very uncommon accident.

It is astonishing how quickly the floods come on sometimes in the colonies. The Post Office, which stands at the corner of Bourke and Elizabeth Streets, is in the valley, for Melbourne is built on two hills. This Elizabeth Street during wet weather used to be a roaring river, where boats could be rowed about. One dry morning, while I was waiting my turn for letters at the Post-Office on a mail day, I was startled by seeing a great tidal wave rolling along Elizabeth Street and swamping the shops as it reached them. Pedestrians were racing for life before it to seek high ground ; we on the platform of the Post-Office rushed for all the high parts we could reach. I got up the ornamental base of one of the pillars and clung there, with the water dashing over my waist, while some of the less fortunate ones were swept away. This wave came upon the city unexpectedly, for we had not seen rain for months ;

yet it had been raining up the country, and this was the result.

Again, I was spending the evening with a bachelor friend, who occupied a small cottage somewhere near Emerald Hill. To get here there used to be a long wooden bridge, with handrail, over the swamp. It came on raining while we were engaged talking, and although the house was raised on piles, very soon the floor was covered with the rising flood, so that we had to go into the upper regions, and stay there prisoners, without food for two days, with table and chairs floating about in the room downstairs, and all our provisions under water. The flood fell on the second day, so that we managed to wade out and get up to Emerald Hill, and lay in a supply of food, but I did not get back to my lodgings until the fourth day.

Where that friend is now I cannot say, or how we became first acquainted. I fancy that it must have been that we met in a common lodging-house, and so drew to one another. He had been a schoolmaster in the old country, and in the colonies had gone gold-digging, which he liked much better than teaching. When he made enough money he came down to Melbourne and enjoyed himself, buying and reading books, or going to the theatre. He was a good critic, and took a great delight in correcting my plays, stories, and poetry; he was my first appreciative audience, and, better, an impartial critic of my errors. Some young men have the privileges of Oxford, but I had better—the coaching and judgment of a deep student of books, and of the world as well, to put me right. He said I had genius and would make a mark. I trust that he was also a prophet.

When he went to the theatre he sat in the gallery, for he wished to prolong his life in town and economise his money. He was one of the most careless men as to ex-

ternal appearance, but told me to be particular as to mine, for it was more often the cover than the contents of a book which caused it to be sold.

I tried to find out my old friend the last time I was in Victoria, but could not; he had vanished like the old wooden houses where we used to meet; yet, perhaps, if he still lives, he may recall the days we spent together in the Free Library or the streets: how he criticised the plays and the poems, picking out the good parts and drawing his pen across the bad. He may remember the nights he used to watch me come on the stage (I was stage-struck at the time, and tried to be an actor), and understand how much I owe to him, and how I would like to prove my gratitude and veneration, if only I could do so.

CHAPTER X

MELBOURNE (continued)

Theatrical Experience—Little Bourke Street—Paddy's Market—
Melbourne Life under the Surface—Something more to be Desired
than Laudanum.

THE Theatre Royal is not much changed from what it was in the olden days. It is still in the same place, about the middle of Bourke Street, but I do not think that they used to decorate the walls of its vestibule with the awful posters and advertisements which they do now, or else I was more easily satisfied in those days with artistic externals, and so have forgotten; but I got a shock when I went into it the last time to see it all covered over like a London hoarding. It was like meeting an old and respected friend, after fifteen years' separation, as a 'sandwich-man'; it made me melancholy, and almost spoilt my pleasure in the play.

I appreciate trade and the advances of commerce as well as any one can, only it should be as much subordinate in the temples of art, poesy, and religion, as it can possibly be. Suggest it delicately if it must be done at all, as I suppose it must, both in theatres, art galleries, and churches, only keep it from overpowering the sentiment, or else the influence is utterly lost.

I stuck long and obstinately to my fallacy that I would make an actor. Twice every twenty-four hours did I walk along Little Bourke Street to the stage entrance for

six or eight months, dreaming dreams, and refusing to be awakened ; but at last I was cured.

How overpoweringly cheeky a boy can be. As a specimen of my histrionic ability, I gave the manager, stage manager, and a big audience of accomplished actors and actresses, the love scene in 'Romeo and Juliet,' the death scene in 'Othello,' and the soliloquy in 'Hamlet.' It astonishes me to this day that they did not all laugh. I think that my audacity must have stupefied them into silence, for the manager observed, after a gasp or two, 'Yes, you may come on if you like as super. We want respectable young fellows if we can get them.'

My salary as super was to be 15*s.* per week, stockings and sundries found for me. I think that I would have liked it very well on these terms, and starved myself on 15*s.* weekly out of pure affection for the profession ; but my gorge rose at carrying on furniture and laying the carpets, for the audiences were very personal at these times, and I was very sensitive and proud. So after the first night of humiliation, I rebelled, and refused to do that degrading duty. Then the captain of the supers rushed off to complain to the stage-manager, who brought the manager, who asked me blandly if I wanted 'leading parts to play, or what ?'

'No,' I replied ; 'but I won't lay carpets or carry on chairs.'

'Then you will have to become a pupil,' he replied. So I consented to be a pupil. 'But pupils get no salary, and have to provide their own wigs and fleshings ;' upon which information I grew melancholy, and said I did not think that I could afford the job of a pupil.

'I'll tell you what I'll do,' observed my friend the manager : 'I'll take you on as a pupil without any premium and give you super's wages. Will that suit you ?'

I agreed joyfully, got shares in the dressing-room of the clown and the stock comic man, and the direst hatred from all the supers and ballet-girls for the favour shown to me. I had to mix with them constantly, but I wasn't one of them, so got punished in a hundred ways for it. In fact, I was neither 'fish, fowl, nor flesh,' but just like a middy on board a merchantman. Trap-doors were left open for me to fall down and break my neck, ballet-girls complained constantly of my awkwardness, or pretended that I tore their stage dresses; the actors and actresses—that is, the utility lot, with the exception of the clown and the young sentimental man—ignored me utterly, and only the leading ladies and gentlemen showed me any attention. They were above jealousy, and could afford to be generous.

I worked through the first week, getting credit for my fleshings and brace of wigs, &c., and found myself, after my wages were paid, owing 20s. to the costumier, and therefore in a more hopeless position than before; so once more I sought out the manager and stated my difficulty.

'I'm sure I don't know what to do. You have a respectable appearance, and I like respectable people about me, yet you have not enough experience to put you on utility work. Suppose I give you 30s. per week; will that do?'

Again I was joyful, and went to work hopefully. But with my increased salary they began to give me single lines to say, and make an officer of me instead of a common soldier, so that I had trunks to borrow, and other sundries, which mostly brought my costumier's weekly account to 25s. or 30s., leaving me nothing to live upon, for they changed their pieces often then.

Once more I sought my friend, and once more he yielded, and gave me 3l. per week, which was utility wages.

So I worried through for a few months, getting small

parts to play, which nearly gave me heart-disease, I was so horrified each night I went on lest I would not do it right.

At this time I existed on two meals per day—breakfast and tea—a hot bath once a week, a weekly shave from a negro barber (whose love letters I wrote), and one Manilla cigar each Monday after my bath, reserving my remaining shilling for foolscap paper to write my poems and plays upon, for to my muse I was attached and faithful.

I saw many stars, male and female, come and go during that time. Walter Montgomery, the unfortunate, was the greatest, I think, who filled the stage, and the most generous. Herr 'Bunckem,' the most tyrannical, bumptious, and mean.

I think it was Henry — who finally cured me of my stage mania. Before that I had a good many rebuffs, such as one evening when the clown and I were acting as the murderers in 'Macbeth,' I uttered my line with such melodramatic effect that he muttered hoarsely in my ear that if ever I did that sort of thing when in his company he would throttle me before the audience; and at the time he looked ferocious enough to have done it.

Yes, it was Henry — who did the final trick, and 'Richard the Third' was the play. I shall always feel a special veneration for Shakespeare and this tragedian for that service.

I played the part of the courtier who rushes in and cries, 'My Lord of Buckingham is ta'en.'

I was nervous as usual about my line, and for fear that I should miss my cue learnt off about a page before and one after it, so as to be sure and make no mistake; for this Richard was a terribly earnest and energetic actor, who did not like to be kept waiting.

'Now, on you go, youngster!' whispered the prompter, as I stood shivering and almost blind with horror at the wings;

and on I rushed, with the whole stage and audience a blank before me, and uttered with full dramatic force :

‘ Buckingham is ta’en. Off with his head ! Ha ! ha ! So much for Buckingham ! ’

I got no further and remember no more, except that the bloody Richard seized me in his remorseless clutches, and after shaking me backwards and forwards fiercely, all the while roaring words which were not to be found in Shakespeare, ignominiously kicked me off the stage, amid the wild laughter of the house in front, while the curtain rang down.

I was too ambitious, my friend the manager thought ; while I felt that I would never conquer my stage nervousness, and so straightway wisely discarded the buskin.

Still, if I did not learn to act, my stage experience was not lost, for I learnt a lot of business useful to me in other ways, business which successful playwrights and dramatists will be able to understand and appreciate.

I went through Little Bourke Street again, this last time with a couple of detectives, visiting the Chinese opium-dens and gambling-houses, a full account of which I have already written for Cassell’s ‘ Picturesque Australasia,’ so I need not go over it now ; only that while it did not take away my admiration for much in John Chinaman, in spite of those particular vices which are to be seen in Little Bourke Street, it made me regret that such dens are allowed to stand in the centre of such a city.

It is not the Chinese I object to so much in this quarter as the European refugees, male and female, who are there to be discovered. ‘ Johnny ’ in Victoria is a model of cleanliness and industry, and as the times go, honest also. His Fan-tan is a game of chance entirely, in which he deals fairly with his customers, taking the same risk himself that they take, and losing his money much more placidly and philosophically than they do.

In the smoking-dens also it is not the Celestial who disgusts us. Somehow it seems as natural to see a Chinaman smoke opium as to meet a New Guinea native without a pair of pants on, but it is those awful white men and women who are to be met there who horrify us. Those sedate, quiet-voiced, educated housebreakers, pickpockets, and cut-throats, who gather here, and will discourse on the literature of the day with one another when they are not plotting outrage of the vilest order; those fair-faced, lady-like women who look modest and lovable, souls damned to the lowest Hades, who have grown so refined and subdued in all kinds of nameless vice, that nothing can stir up their torpid livers, for they have exhausted the most unnatural. Educated to the full—all are highly educated in the colonies, for State schools are free, and education compulsory to the vilest—they have acquired all that the board teachers can teach them, and surpass for villainy the world.

‘Our pickpockets are the most highly accomplished on earth, our murderers the most heartless,’ said my guide, the detective, proudly; and as I went amongst them and looked round I could not doubt him.

Little Bourke Street is what I would fancy hell may be after this world has *progressed* and abolished all traditions of the past, when men and women have probed everything material and scientific, and outgrown all emotions, tastes, appetites, pleasures, desires, natural and unnatural; when the blue-stockings and scholars have torn the veil from everything sacred or tender, and the scientific blind moles have thoroughly vivisected life; when the fulness of time has come, and the leaders of thought are scandal-mongers and mud-stirrers, or else flippant cynics and classical atheists; in fact, when we have all damned ourselves utterly and beyond redemption, and left the poor old Devil, like Othello, with his ‘occupation gone.’

Paddy's Market is one of the institutions of Melbourne. It is all covered in now, and lighted with electric lamps, which have a beautiful, fairy-like effect. With the vegetable and fruit stalls, it presents a busy, lively scene on a Saturday night, full of character and colour ; something for a painter to revel in.

Fifteen years ago it was not all covered in, and had no electric lights. Tramps, outcasts, and homeless vagabonds used to congregate here and pass the night out of the dew, for there were corrugated-iron roofs over some parts of it.

I had to pass here nightly, after the theatre was over, to reach my lodgings in Little Collins Street, and witnessed some piteous sights—men, women, children, honest and dishonest, virtuous and vicious, all lay huddled together for warmth, mostly all starving.

Why? Perhaps they had come out to the country without consideration, and in ignorance of what it was. Emigration at the time had something to do with it. Unscrupulous home agents, for the sake of their fees, had launched out hordes of subjects unfit for the land. The labourers and tradesmen were all right, also the domestic servants ; they got places easily and made money, and found comforts such as they could not find in England. It was the professionals who suffered : writers, lawyers, governesses (ladies and gentlemen), who lay here huddled together, starving, helpless, and hopeless.

Some of those who loved virtue and honesty better than life, went down to the river Yarra and found a solution of their difficulties there ; but the bulk of them had not the courage to die, or the brains to think it fully out, so, instead of turning their backs on town and old traditions, they loafed about the streets by day, and lay under the shelter of Paddy's Market by night.

I used to disturb them sometimes as I picked my way

amongst them in the dark ; sometimes I trod by accident on dainty limbs, to hear a groan or a moan in answer to my apology.

One night a lady accosted me at the corner of Swanston Street. She was famishing, had not tasted food for three days, and was ready to give herself up for a crust of bread. By a rare chance I had a sixpence in my pocket, which I gave her, and then she told me her story. She had been hired by a lady as companion out to Melbourne, and discarded when she landed ; she had been educated at home to fill the place of a first-class governess, but could not get a place here, for she had not learnt to cook or wash ; then, while looking about, she had been forced to pawn her clothing, so that she could no longer apply for a situation. What was there for her left ?—the streets or the Yarra.

After three days of resistance and famishing, she had chosen the streets.

What could I do for her ? Nothing excepting that poor sixpence, for besides her there were hundreds of others in the same condition ; and yet, in spite of her pallor and exhaustion, she was very lovely, young and high bred.

Another night I had taken shelter from a shower of rain under a verandah in Spring Street ; there was only one young woman standing waiting, like myself, on the shower passing—a Jewess, as I could see by her dark, Semitic features, and not too beautiful ; yet, perhaps, the misery that was upon her had robbed her of some of her usual attractions ; those dark, heavy-lidded women get all so much of the *Mater Dolorosa* appearance when they are in misery.

Backwards and forwards she walked restlessly, while I stood still under the lamp shadow and watched the light play over her face as she crossed it, having nothing else to do. She was making up her mind for something, I could

see, and I was speculating in a vague way upon what it could be, when all at once she stopped and faced me, saying:

‘Do you think this rain will last long?’

‘I don’t think so,’ I replied, and then a long pause, while we both stood together looking at the drops pouring over the gutter of the verandah. At last she spoke again:

‘Would you mind doing me a favour, sir?’

‘No! That is, if I can. What is it?’

‘I want some medicine from the chemist over there, but he will not give it to me; perhaps he might give it to you if you tried.’

‘Perhaps. What kind of medicine do you want?’

‘A shilling’s worth of laudanum. Will you try?’

‘Certainly,’ I said, taking the money from her and starting off; then a thought struck me, and I turned back and faced her.

‘What do you want it for, Miss?’

‘Toothache. I have it frightfully to-night.’

‘No you haven’t,’ I said quietly. ‘It is heartache which ails you, and you want to kill yourself—is that not true?’

‘Yes, you are quite right, I want to kill myself. Now, I suppose, you will be for giving me in charge.’

‘No. I would rather help you to die if you are quite sure that you are done with life. But are you sure? Tell me all about it before I go for the poison.’

Then she told me how she had offended her kindred, the Jews, by becoming a Christian, and how they had cursed her and discarded her. She was a tailoress, but most of the trade was in the hands of the Jews, and they would not employ her, while the Christians had no room for her.

‘I have just 3*l*. left now, the sum required to bury me and settle what I owe for lodgings; and I don’t want to die in debt, or have a pauper’s funeral.’

‘But have you tried every shop in Melbourne?’

‘Yes, all of them, without a hope of success.’

‘Then I’ll get you the laudanum; only I want a favour from you also before I get it.’

‘What do you want?’

‘I want you to live until to-morrow night and try all round once more. If you don’t get a job to-morrow, then meet me here at six o’clock, and I’ll do my best to get it for you; but if you do get a job, don’t come. Now you know, I’ll be here from six to half-past, so that if I don’t meet you I shall know that you have been lucky. Is it a promise?’

‘Yes, I promise to try once more, and do nothing rash until to-morrow night.’

I returned her shilling, and we shook hands and went separate ways; the rain was over by this time. Next night I waited at the place from six till half-past without seeing her; she had passed out of my life.

Six months afterwards I was waiting at the Post Office to ask about letters, when a pretty, laughing-faced young woman came up the steps, with a young man beside her. As soon as she saw me she darted forward and shook me warmly by the hand. I recognised the Jewess whom I had met under the Spring Street verandah.

‘I got a job next day, so that I did not need to come back to you. Wonderful! wasn’t it; and better, I also got a husband. I say, dear,’ she cried to her companion, who came up to us, and who I also saw belonged to her own race, ‘this is the young fellow who made me go the round once more.’ To me: ‘This is my husband; I got a place after all in a Christian shop, the first I tried, and he was the foreman there. We have been married two months.’

‘And are you still a Christian?’ I asked, curiously.

‘No! he cured me of that,’ she answered, with a merry laugh.

CHAPTER XI

MELBOURNE (continued)

Colonial Institutions—Fitzroy Gardens—Old Friends and Times—Our Commonwealth—The Yarra Yarra.

THE colonials are justly proud of their fine buildings, their churches, institutions, gardens, State schools, laws, and independence. They eclipse England in everything; and it is only right that they should do so, for they began where we ended. Laying their foundation of prosperity upon the experience of slow centuries, they started straight away with the latest improvements in Pullman cars, cable omnibuses, and political economy, having the extra advantage over us of nothing in the way of antiquity or tradition to hamper them or keep them back.

There were no poor branches of decayed aristocratic families to make billets for. If the wealthy colonial longs to make an alliance with blue blood, that is his own particular vanity, which does not concern the State. The Members of Parliament are chosen from and for the people, and there is no House of Lords to throw cold water upon everything which smacks of advance. There are no armies of useless taxmen walking about and draining the life-blood of the people. The *ad valorem* duty protects the people from that waste, and citizens only pay for what they consume, as it ought to be. The police are the people's servants and not their masters, and the colonial workman is a man and not a serf.

What I have said of city life here below the surface may be said of all large towns; in London how much worse it is, where starvation is intensified by the cruel ice, snow, and fogs! At least, the loafer has the sun to warm him in Australia, and if he can only leave the town and banish all ideas of what he was, and is willing to take any kind of work, the rags which may make him despised in the city will not be noticed in the bush.

I do not wish to write what has been written before, or quote from books, excepting where it is necessary to give statistics, and as I can only breathe freely in the country, and feel choked and cynical in cities, I shall give you as little as I possibly can of the cities, and as much as I can of my experiences under the gum trees.

The old wooden houses are all replaced by palatial buildings in imperishable blue stone, with granite, marble, or sandstone facings and ornaments. I used to live in an old wooden house opposite the Fitzroy Gardens. One of my first visits was to that place, but it was all changed, so that I could not decide which was the site. I went into the Gardens, which were also all improved out of recognition, and tried to fix the spot where I used to lie in the moonlight nights, with the dews all about me and the mosquitoes humming around; but I had to give it up, and wander down the sheltered walks instead, making sketches and watching the ghostly gleaming of the southern moon as it lay over the many statues of Diana, &c., or in straight bars across the blackened pathways, with the velvety depth of the foliage. Diana is pretty prominent in the Fitzroy Gardens, which is a favourite resort of Melbourne lovers on moonlight nights.

What days and nights these were long ago with my companions, who were all ladies and gentlemen! Had they been tradesmen or labourers, they would have been better

housed than they could afford to be. We flaunted our shabby clothes brazenly about the principal streets, laughed over the comicality of our straits, and lay down on our canvas truckle beds famishing yet happy ; for we were all young, thoughtless, and had given no hostages to fortune, so that we did not require to bend our heads, but could afford to be merry, and substitute the want of dinner with stories of the magnificent dinners we had once enjoyed.

Ours was a commonwealth of poverty. None of us cared what he did, so long as the money was honestly made. One of my friends had been in a cavalry regiment. He was a big, strong fellow, and sometimes went out stone-breaking. The rest of us did whatever we could get to do, putting all the money we earned into the hands of the wives—for some of us had wives—to lay out to the best advantage. It was seldom that we were all fully employed, but that did not matter ; those who were off duty helped to amuse the ladies at home.

We mixed with the lowest and vilest, but we kept ourselves apart, and none of us ever forgot that we were ladies and gentlemen, in spite of externals.

There was a French Count, who earned, I think, the least money, and yet was the most industrious of us all. He had spent his patrimony at the gambling-houses, and had a mania that, if he only got up early enough in the morning, before the scavengers started work, he might find a sovereign or a purse on the streets. So, to be sure of his game, he spent most of his days in bed, and most of his nights and early mornings prowling through the streets with stooping back and downcast eyes. I think he once found a half-crown, which confirmed him in his theory, and ruined our hopes of ever persuading him to give up the search.

Once we saw an advertisement for some work to be done by contract ; that was a great day for the commonwealth.

We all started in company to the place of appointment, to find about a hundred other contractors on the spot, trained and amateur. By-and-by the employer came, showed us the work, and asked us to state our prices, which after a diligent look round we did.

‘Thank you, gentlemen,’ said the would-be employer. ‘I have a brother to whom I have to give the job, only I wanted to be sure that he didn’t overcharge me. Brothers, you know, are apt to take advantage, ain’t they?’

He smiled pleasantly upon his thunderstruck audience as he finished his remarks; upon which the ex-cavalry captain stepped calmly over, and taking hold of the advertiser’s arm, observed:

‘Gentlemen, we have been invited from all parts of Melbourne, and so lost the chance of a day’s work, so that this affectionate brother may be able to grind down his relative. What ought we to do under the circumstances?’

‘Kick him all round,’ yelled the enraged mob. Upon which the captain let go his hold, lifted his massive but well-worn boot, and set the example.

I don’t know whether that brother got the job, but the one who had fooled us had a bad ten minutes before he made his escape.

The commonwealth has long ago broken up, and the members have returned to respectability and comforts, yet I don’t think any of them will ever forget those olden days. I visited one of the married couples about a year after we had drifted apart. They were in affluent circumstances then, while I had been roughing it in the bush. A curious sensation came over me as I entered the drawing-room, and gingerly tried to balance myself on the edge of the slender art chair.

‘It’s quite strong enough to bear you,’ remarked my hostess, seeing my nervousness lest I should break the

chair if I sat full upon it. 'I understand your feelings, for we felt exactly the same when we first returned to civilisation.'

Then we got on to talking of old days. Her mother, who was a stately old dame, was visiting them at the time; but we all thought she had gone out, instead of which she had only gone to the verandah, and so could hear every word we uttered.

We were living it all over again, with 'Don't you remember so and so?' &c., which brought out another yarn hardly fit for ears uninitiated, and were just in the middle of a story about an occasion when we were all desperately hard up, when the French-window was opened, and the mother appeared, with a face white with horror.

'Do you mean to say that my daughter ever led such an awful life?'

'Yes, and it is one of the sweetest of our memories,' responded her daughter, with a sigh and moistened eyes. 'There has been nothing like it, now it is all over.'

Ah! those were the days of short commons and irrepressible spirits; the air was lung-invigorating, and with youth it was utterly impossible to feel any long fits of depression. They did come on sometimes, like the hot winds and 'brick-fielders,' but they quickly passed away, leaving renewed buoyancy, hope, and lightness of spirits.

The hot winds seem also to have grown more spiritless than in the olden times: then we could always depend upon three days of scorching, dry, magnetic blasts, as from a furnace, when all one could do was to lie about, day and night, trying to find the coolest planks—bed and sheets an impossibility—while the butter became oil and food obnoxious, with the fine, penetrating sand over everything: They were very methodical in their course; first a dry morning, with a brassy sun and a wind blowing softly,

which appeared to take the pluck out of one ; then hotter and hotter, until you lay about like a fish out of water, gasping ; on the third afternoon came the ' brick-fielder,' a sudden tempest of red dust, before which the bravest had to fly ; and close upon its heels the blessed tempest of rain, which renewed youth, revived all things, and made the next day glorious. Now the hot wind is uncertain and feeble ; it may end in rain or not—one can never tell. I have always thought that these periodical hot, scorching blasts killed the microbes and animalculæ of fever and consumption, and so were the real saviours of the colonies.

Melbourne is particularly rich in gardens and reserves. The Carlton, although not so shady or classical as the Fitzroy, are wonderfully pretty, and have a beautiful lake, overhung by drooping trees, where one may sit in the hot days and feel cool. Here are situated the Exhibition buildings.

The Botanical Gardens are a very fine example of landscape gardening, designed by Guilfoyle out of a very barren waste by the side of the river Yarra, from which a good view of the city can be had, with a variegated foreground of leafage.

Toorak is a fashionable suburb of Melbourne ; so is St. Kilda by the sea. Imposing palaces and vast gardens are the characteristics of Toorak, where much money is spent. St. Kilda is very lovely, cool and fresh, with the deep blue waters studded with pleasure-craft, and sun-lit sands covered with fashionable dresses and gay parasols.

The Yarra Yarra is a serpentine river of about 150 miles in length, taking its rise in the southern spurs of the Dividing Range, and emptying itself into Salt Water River and Hobson's Bay, the port of Melbourne. It is a good river for boating since the Falls have been blasted away, with pretty banks, where the trees droop over and into it.

It was once a pellucid stream, old colonials tell me, and, as I remember it, was a very capital place either for love-making or ending up the dream. Many lovers have found an eternal marriage here, for people in love seem mostly to take to water when they are in despair. Business troubles make a man prefer a lofty jump, with a reception of paving stones, as the appropriate termination to shattered schemes.

There was one incident that I recollect occurred on the banks of the Yarra Yarra, nearly opposite to the Botanical Gardens, which might have ended tragically but for my chum the ex-cavalry captain—whom I shall call Jack for short—and myself, and where our spirit of humanity was turned into ridicule.

One star-lit night (the stars are very luminous in the south) Jack and I were sitting under the shadow of the drooping trees, dreamily looking at the river and lazily smoking our pipes. We had not spoken to one another for ten minutes or more. The night was hot, and even the effort to puff seemed too much for us, so our pipes had gone out, and neither of us thought of re-lighting, when, close in front of us, we saw the figure of a young woman carrying a small dog start out of the darkness and sit down on the bank, close to the water's edge.

She had been crying as she came along, and started afresh as she sat fondling her dog, saying all sorts of endearing things to it and bidding it good-bye.

We both felt instinctively what she was going to do, and simultaneously laid down our pipes to be ready when the time came, holding our breath meanwhile.

At last she made her final speech to her pet, and, laying it down, all of a sudden sprang to her feet, making the plunge forward. We both clutched her at the same moment, and pulled her back before more than the front

end of her skirt was wet, although in the struggle we all slipped, fell in, and got drenched.

‘Let me go, I tell you,’ she said, making a savage bite



at Jack's arm ; but he held firmly, and brought her back, in spite of her frantic efforts to get away. Then, as we were trying to soothe her, the dog barking furiously all the while, a policeman came on the scene, grasped the situation at a glance, and promptly took her and the dog in charge, giving us both orders to attend the court next morning.

Next day Jack and I gave our evidence, unwillingly enough, stating exactly what we had seen. Then came the girl's turn to speak. She had had a night to dry her dress, spruce herself up, and compose her story. She was a pretty, pale-faced girl, with hard, black eyes, and regarded us with great scorn.

She told the magistrate that she had merely gone down to the Yarra Yarra to drown her dog, mocked at our heroic efforts, and complained bitterly at being detained a night in prison through the blank stupidity of two officious fools.

The policeman scratched his head dubiously, but he was not called upon to speak. Then the grave old magistrate turned seriously upon us and read us a stern lecture, while all the people about the court laughed derisively at us. We took it all with crimson cheeks and dejected heads.

We got away at last without being mobbed, and the girl and her dog passed out in triumph ; but when Jack turned the corner he vowed, with many adjectives, that it was the last woman he would try to save from drowning herself.

I had not much leisure to sentimentalise round Melbourne during this last visit ; therefore, after making a hasty run over the city and what notes I required, I went over the suburbs, taking sketches of Williamstown, Sandridge, St. Kilda, &c., and got off as soon as possible towards Geelong.

From the top of Doncaster Tower, in the Heidelberg direction, there is a fine but very distant view of the city to be seen. This tower is two hundred feet high, and a stiff climb, but easy to descend if one could only imitate the example of the sailor-guide there, who clutches hold of the wire-rope supports and slides down almost like flying. I did not try to descend that way. The trick wanted practice, therefore I contented myself with the stairway, after taking my sketches. It looks a beautiful landscape, seen from that height of two hundred feet, with Melbourne basking in the far distance on the one side and the country of Heidelberg and Beaconsfield on the other. It is also a pleasant seven-mile walk back in the cool of the evening, first with the sunset, then the pale moon lighting up the bark of the gum trees and giving them the appearance of leopards' skins.

The walk to Sandridge and Williamstown is also most interesting, and there I got fair pictures of the city, the shipping, White Tower, the Bay, bits of the Yarra Yarra and Salt Rivers. After this I packed up my traps and said *au revoir* to Melbourne.



CHAPTER XII

VICTORIA

The Western District—Towards Camperdown—Geelong—James Dawson, Author of 'The Australian Aborigine'—His Work—The Black-fellow and his Ways.

WHAT a delight it is for a man who loves open air, green trees, blue skies and solitude, and who abhors white collars and stiff neckties, to be able to turn his back on the city and all its artificial ways, and be able to fill and light his pipe, and work as he wants to work, without any affectation or restraint.

For the time being I am done with people and bustling streets ; I don't want to see another book or picture worked by man. I only desire to look straight out and take direct lessons from the Great Master, study His effects, and see how great they are, and how little the ' stylists ' are. After all that has been said or written concerning Art, the camera is greater than all our small masters of the brush or pen.

I suppose my get-up looks like affectation : a pair of stiff leggings that I may tramp through snake country with comparative safety, my oldest trousers tucked in, a grey

flannel shirt with the collar attached and a soft felt hat—this was the costume worn in the early days when men studied ease before elegance, and meant to work. I mean to work, and I don't wish to pay more than I can help for washing, or take an article more with me than I can carry on the tramp. I know it is affectation in these refined modern days of the colonies, and I note the amused look in the eyes of my fellow-passengers as I take my place on deck at Queen's Wharf for Geelong. But what of that? people have no right to wear stiff collars in a warm country, and every man ought to study his own fashion.

The wharf is busy this morning. I see the little steamer 'Dawn,' bound for Portland, getting up steam, making a rare mystery of smoke-fog, which I gloat over and note down. We are off at last, down the Yarra Yarra with its shipping and barges and buoys, past the junction of the Yarra and Salt Rivers; the city lies behind us, hazy and smoke-enveloped from the steamers and factories between us and it.

Past Williamstown and Sandridge and into the open bay; a glorious morning, with grey effects of sunshine through clouds, the You Yang Mountains loom up, with one large bird flying overhead, and a clear sea between; nearer, details come out, and deep reflections trail over the bay. Now we are at the Geelong sand-bar, with its screaming flocks of white sea-birds and danger-posts—the great bar which spoilt for that town its chance of being the capital of Victoria, although the Victorians proved in Melbourne that they could surmount greater difficulties than the like of this, when they resolved to found a great city. The quiet little town lies before us at last, so peaceful and beautiful that I am glad they did not mar it by making it the capital, and then we are once more ashore.

I fix upon quiet lodgings, after a walk through the

town, and make a sketch or two—one which struck a warmth into my heart, for it was an echo from the ‘Ould Country,’ a cabin picturesquely in want of repair, with piggery and everything complete. While I was sketching it, the owner came to the door, and leaned out, watching me while he smoked his cutty pipe. ‘Ye’re drawing me house, sure,’ observed he, with a pleased smile, and I knew that I had not been mistaken. It was Pat from over the sea, still unchanged by his surroundings.

Next morning I am roused by a fire-alarm sounding, so I jump up and have a wash and go out to see the country; then as I return to breakfast the church bells sound for morning prayer. How peaceful all this is, how delightful!

My landlady has as a pet an Australian magpie, who is a great speaker and a most adroit thief. She brings in breakfast, a dish of chops nicely done; but what a mound! She feels disappointed that I leave any, and thinks that I must be delicate; beef and mutton are so cheap in Australia.

Geelong has not much excitement or trade to stir it up, though it was busy enough during the gold-digging times. As Bonwick writes: ‘She is a beautiful but neglected child.’ It is built on the shores of Corio Bay (which has been compared, and with justice, to the Bay of Naples for picturesque loveliness), and lies forty-five miles south-west from Melbourne; it has the credit of establishing the first woollen mill in Victoria, and has one of the largest tanneries—enough commercial honours for anything one-half so perfect.

I live a busy but ideal life here, sketching during the day Fyans Ford and the Moorabool Hills and valley, the Paper Mill and the river Barwon, the country beyond the Botanical Gardens, down by the Bay, and Geelong by day, sunrise, sunset, twilight, and moonlight; strolling down Moorabool Street and the market-place, looking at the

Salvation Army marching by torchlight, listening to the beautiful chimes of St. Paul's, getting pastoral subjects at every turn—sheep coming along the road, with the shepherd on horseback. How I wish I could stay in Geelong for a month or two, watching the different lights playing over the You Yangs; but I am like the wandering Jew and must go on—on for ever.

My time has come. My friend has called.

We go by train to Camperdown, where I meet the genial old James Dawson, the friend and mourner of the aboriginal, and author of an exhaustive book on the habits of the primitive man. Here I go over his station, Renny Hill, and examine the pictures of his son-in-law, Mr. Taylor, who hides some gems here in the bush. He has an original portrait of Robert Burns, by Taylor, an ancestor of my kindly host. Here the poet is depicted shortly before he died—a much more realistic likeness than any which I have ever before seen; he looks like the burly farmer which he was and must have been. There is also a Borgia, a 'Sleeping Jesus' by Murillo, 'Holy Family' by Correggio, and many other masterpieces, which the Melbourne Gallery ought to have to enrich it, and may have some day.

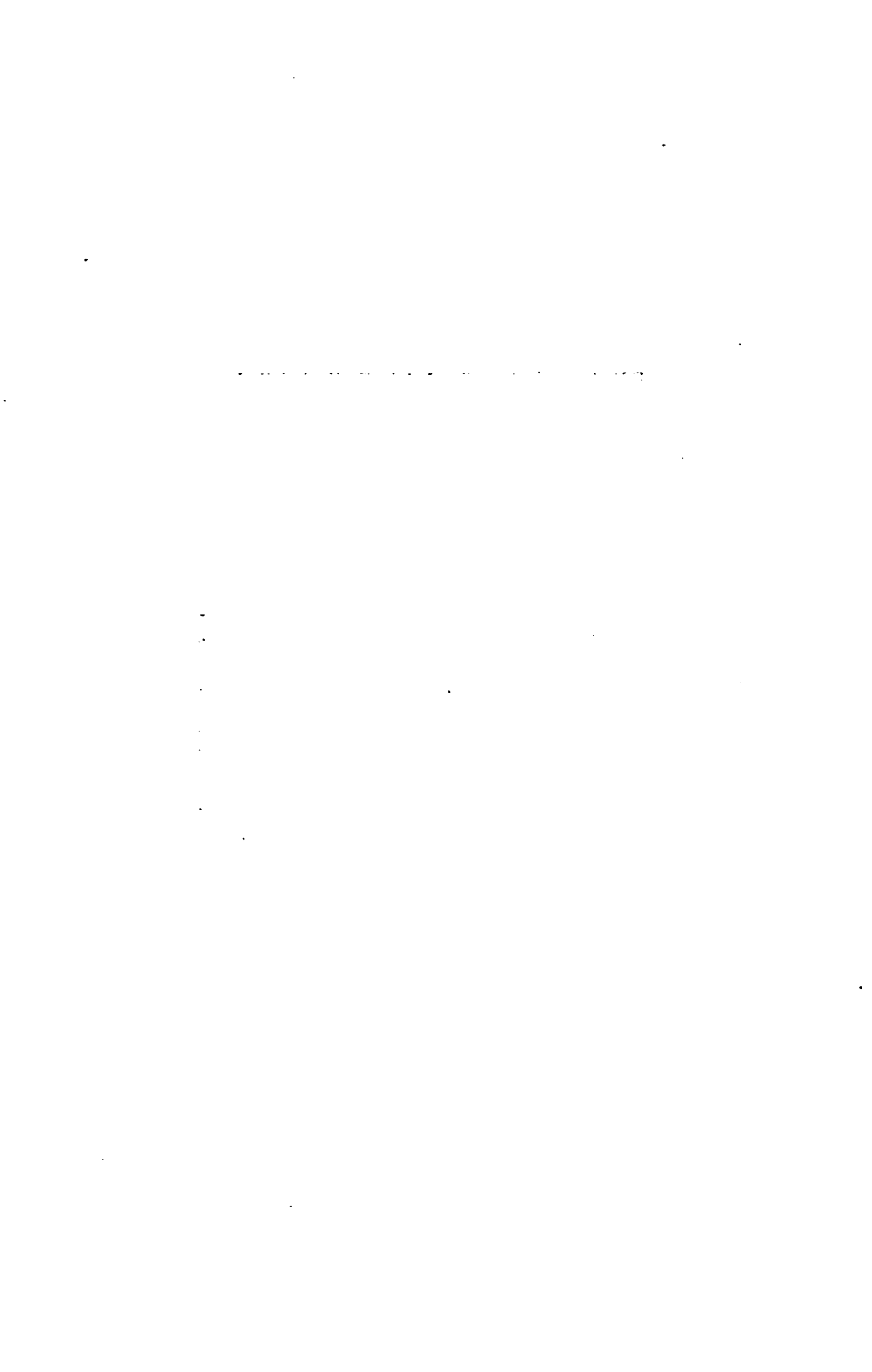
James Dawson is one of the grand old men who are always boyish and young in heart and light of step. His daughter and he lived in close friendship with the natives of Western Victoria, and learnt their language and habits; and I think there is no man alive who can tell more about them, or who admires them more.

We had a long and interesting talk about them, or rather what they were, for the tombstone of the last survivor has lately been put up at Camperdown.

He reckons the tribes of the Western Districts to have numbered 21, with 30 fighting men in each tribe, and 90 old men, women, and children; so that when they all



YARRA YARRA AND GEELONG



assembled they numbered 2,520, including 630 fighting men; but in 1880 they had diminished to 14. Now they are totally extinct. The chiefs were regarded with the greatest veneration, and when a father died his land was divided with his wife and children of both sexes. Their laws of marriage are most wonderful, and, from a natural point of view, far-seeing, with, of course, as in all natural laws, little room left for the emotions, marriage being strictly forbidden where even the most distant traces of consanguinity existed. The punishment of offending these laws was death to both parties. For instance, 'The laws of the aborigines forbid a man marrying into his mother's, or even grandmother's, tribe, into any adjoining tribe, or one that speaks his own dialect.' But they make no objections to a man marrying his deceased wife's sister, provided he has either divorced or *killed* his wife first; while the law, like that of the Jewish code, insists that when a married man dies and leaves a family behind him, his brother must marry the widow and rear up the children.

They must have '*wambepan tuuram*,' or '*fresh flesh*,' in all their marriages, so that they have very often to travel far afield for their brides. The Western tribes have a legend that their original progenitor was by descent a *Kuurokutch*, or long-billed cockatoo; his wife was a *Kappa-heear*, or Banksian cockatoo; they had many sons and daughters, who were regarded as *Kappatch* and *Kappaheear*, so could not marry together; therefore they went amongst the pelicans, snakes, and quails for husbands and wives, which, together with those of their first parents, form the five maternal classes of the Western district.

Illegitimacy was rare amongst the aborigines themselves until the Europeans contaminated them, and the frail sinner and her child were put to death and burnt when such did occur. The father was also punished with the

greatest severity, and often killed as well as the woman ; so that such dire consequences made even the fondest Romeos and Juliets pause for consideration before they yielded to over-ardent affection.

Their manner of courting was a little singular, and more forcible than refined, the main point being to teach the wives obedience to their future lords ; but before the young men are able to choose a wife they have to go through the mysteries of *Katnutch*, or manhood, an institution which is so severe that few of the delicate youths ever survived it. Mr. Dawson thinks it was originally designed to get rid of the weakly members of the tribe.

The ' Corroborees ' are where the young men select their wives, and the consent of the young ladies is seldom asked. If one objects, and runs away, then her husband can go after and kill her ; so that it is not often that a wife objects to the man her father picks out for her.

The chief is the best off in this, as in all other matters, for the young men have to ask his consent to their marriage, which asking very often ends in the great man, if she suits his own taste, settling the question by taking the woman himself ; so that the youths have to go and ' look out ' once more for something not so tempting, while the old warrior takes to himself the finest young women he can get, and as many of them as he likes.

It is a great mistake to say that the aborigines have no creed ; they are profound believers in the supernatural.

' Pirumeheal ' is the good spirit ; a gigantic fellow, who lives above the clouds, very harmless and benevolent. The thunder is his voice, and they always listen to it with pleasure and respect. He sends the rain, which is their greatest boon in this thirsty land.

' Muuruup,' or ' Wambem - neung - been - been - aa,' the ' Maker of bad-smelling smoke,' is the evil deity, and author

of every misfortune ; he comes in the lightning, and destroys the trees, and kills the people and eats their children. The owl is his special messenger, tout and spy, so that they abhor this bird of evil omen. Muuruup lives below the ground, in a place all fire, and has a number of evil spirits under his command. The man in the moon is also a devil.

They believe strongly in wraiths, ghosts, male and female devils, and witches. When any one dies his ghost haunts the earth, and, although considered harmless, is regarded with great fear. Every native has a wraith, which only appears to him before his death.

They have their own superstitious ideas of animals also : the grey bandicoot is woman's food, and no male will eat it ; the common bat belongs to the men, who try to protect it in every way ; a porcupine ant-eater near a camp is a sign of death to someone there.

Strange spears and weapons are very reluctantly touched, as it is believed that they may cause sickness and death. They also believe that if an enemy gets possession of any article which has belonged to them, he will be able to use it as a charm against them ; therefore they are very careful when shifting their camps to burn every shred belonging to them which they do not require.

Every tribe has its own doctor, in whose skill great confidence is reposed in times of sickness. When death overtakes them, the body is bound with the knees up to the chest, tied up with an acacia-bark cord in an opossum rug, and buried two feet deep (if the ground is soft enough to dig a grave), with the head towards the rising sun ; if the ground is hard, the body is placed on a bier and removed to the distance of a mile or two from the camp. There the relations prepare a funeral pyre, on which the body is placed, with the head towards the east. Two male

relations then set fire to the pyre, and remain until the body is consumed, scattering the ashes about.

Their corroborees, or great meetings, are mostly held between sunset and sunrise; this also is the favourite time for battles. Their signal for gathering is made by setting fire to a wide circle of long grass, which causes the signal smoke to rise in a remarkably spiral form, which is seen from a great distance and always answered.

Each tribe on arrival at the appointed spot raises the 'Wuuries' or sheds, and lights its fire in front of them on the side next their own country; and when all are assembled the different chiefs walk along, tapping each member on the head with a piece of bark, asking his name, his tribe's, and his class. After this they make a wide circle, and the chiefs alone discuss matters inside, the others remaining seated around.

For war purposes, when help is required, the chief sends two messengers through the friendly tribes with message-sticks. These sticks are pieces of wood about six inches long and one inch in diameter, with five or six sides, one of these indicating by notches the number of tribes required, and the others the number of men required from each. When the nearest tribe gets this message the chief decides who are to go, and then forwards the stick to his next neighbour, and so on until all are summoned.

Persons accused of wrong-doing are summoned by a month's notice to appear before the assembled tribes, at risk of being outlawed and killed.

The offender goes to the meeting armed with two war-spears, a light shield, and his boomerang. If it be a private wrong he is painted white, and, along with his friend or second, placed opposite his accusers. These range themselves at about fifty yards distance, and throw four or five gnurin spears and two boomerangs a-piece at him, all

together, like a shower. If he manages to ward them off without getting wounded his second hands him a heavy shield and he is attacked singly by his enemies, who each deliver one blow with a 'liangle,' as blood must be spilt. It ends in his being hit, after which they all shake hands, dress his wounds, and make friends.

Tribal quarrels are sometimes settled by single combat, sometimes they take the form of a tournament.

This information, of course, I gleaned from my friend Mr. James Dawson. It mainly characterised the Western tribes of Victoria, who are now extinct, but amongst whom he and his gifted daughter so long sojourned; yet, from what I learnt of other tribes, the aborigine is pretty much the same all over Australia.

He has many curious anecdotes to tell about their habits, humour, and superstition, as might be expected, three of which I must give as examples of the intelligence of this commonly despised race.

The First Formation of Water-holes.

One very dry season, when there was no water in all the country, and all the animals were perishing of thirst, a magpie, a lark, and a gigantic crane consulted together. They could not understand how it was that a turkey-bustard of their acquaintance was never thirsty, and, knowing that he would not tell them where his supply of water was obtained from, they resolved to watch and find out where he drank. They flew high into the air, and saw him go to a flat stone. Before lifting the stone the turkey, afraid of his treasure being discovered, looked up, and saw the three birds; but they were so high and kept so steady that he took them for small clouds. He lifted the stone, therefore, and drank from a spring running out of a cleft

in a rock. When he replaced the stone and flew away the three spies came down and removed it and took a drink and a bath, remarking, '*King gnakko gnal*'--'we have done him.' They flapped their wings with joy, and the water rose till it formed a lake. They then flew all over the parched country, flapping their wings and forming water-holes, which have been drinking-places ever since.

The Ghost.

A man, travelling in the country of a friendly tribe, came upon a deserted habitation. Above the doorway he saw the usual crooked stick, pointing in the direction which the family had taken, and all round about the place pieces of bark covered with white clay, indicating a death. He found tracks leading to a tree, in which he soon discovered a dead body. Anxious to know who had died, he laid down his rug and weapons at the foot of the tree and ascended it. On removing the opossum rug from the face he found that it was a friend. He wept for a long time, then came down and went away; but he had not gone far before he heard some magpies making a great noise, as though they saw something strange. He turned about to see what it was, and, to his horror and amazement, saw the ghost of the deceased man come down and follow him. He became so terrified that he could not move, and, addressing it, said, 'Why do you frighten me, when I have come to see you, and never did you any harm?' It never spoke, but followed him for a considerable distance, scratching his back meanwhile with its nails, and then returned to the tree. When he reached his friends he told them what had happened and showed them his back, lacerated and bleeding, and said that he had a presentiment that something bad would befall him before long.

At the next meeting of the tribes he was speared through the heart.

The Meteor.

On one occasion (a friend of Dawson's tells this tale), having tried in vain to get an old man—known about Camperdown as Doctor George—to understand something about the Christian religion, I turned the conversation to the subject of a large meteor which had appeared a few months previously, and asked him if he had seen it. After a little time he caught my meaning, and said, 'Yes, me see him, like it fire; him go to—to—'—pointing with his finger its path along the sky. I asked him what he thought it was. He answered, carelessly, 'Borak me know'; then, suddenly brightening up, and putting on a sly, grave countenance, he said, 'Me think great big Master'—pointing to the sky—'want smoke Him pipe; Him strike Him match'—suiting the action to the words—'and puff-puff'—pretending to smoke. Then he made a movement as though he slowly dropped a match through the air. The comical assumption of gravity with which this was said, and the quickness with which the impromptu explanation was invented, showed that if he did not understand my religious teaching, it was certainly not from lack of intelligence.

CHAPTER XIII

NATIVE NAMES OF PLACES

Western District—Camperdown, and Landscape round—Thompson's Mad Bull—Drive to Lara—A Victorian Station—Mount Elephant.

I SHALL not soon forget the pleasant time I had with this genial Victorian squatter. It cheered me upon many a mile of my travelling.

'Why do you call this place Camperdown?' I asked him; for the fact that the land must have had characteristic native names and the incongruity of such a name for such a district struck me forcibly, when they had so much originality to pick and choose from.

'Why?' I had hit my friend in a sore place, for his bright blue eyes blazed out with wrath as he answered: 'Why are all our finest and most poetic native names turned into meaningless English ones? Because some idiot is appointed by Government to rush over the country and give names to places already named properly. The fellow who called our town Camperdown came here in a hurry, pulled out his Bradshaw, and on the first page he opened at random was Camperdown, so he straightway christened it, without rhyme or reason, by that name. And would you believe it, the native name of the township is "Warrnatts." M'Arthur's hill over there is called "Meenin'gnurt." That point of land over there on Lake Bullen Merri is called "Wuurna-wee-wheetch," or the "Home of the Swallow"; the country

is called "Kirk maëring," "Place of Wild Dogs." There are a hundred good titles to pick and choose from—names which signify something—and yet they say Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, and Camperdown, to confuse the traveller and general reader with old names which have neither euphony nor meaning.'

I could not help agreeing with my friend in the spirit of his complaint, for this hideous, or commonplace naming of colonial places is one of the few shortcomings which always jars upon my nerves—this and the 'ringing' and destroying of the gum trees by the settlers.

Before the European ever came to Australia every point, lake, and piece of land had its native title, both suggestive and poetic, as: *Tarnpirr*, or 'Flowing water,' which is now known as Taylor's Creek; *Djerinallum*, or 'Sea Swallow,' instead of Mount Elephant. Certainly Elephant is a most appropriate name for this mountain, as one may see from the sketch; but, of course, the natives have no name for this animal, as it is unknown to them. *Tung'ung brumart*, or 'Eels which Bite the Stones,' instead of the Falls of the Hopkins, where a large number of eels are; &c.

It is too late to alter all these names on the map at this time of day, as it is too late to save those vast forests which have been destroyed; yet I hope some colonial writer may think it worth while to go over the land, and where possible collect the original names of places, so that future generations may be able to see what their fathers missed. I yet hope that the eucalyptus will be regarded as the best tree for colonial parks and avenues, and as one of the most wonderful and perfect trees in the world, something to be justly proud of, and that songs and poems may yet be written and sung about its manifold virtues and disregarded beauties. To me it is the only mighty symbol of the perfect union and ideal marriage, as the bull was the perfection

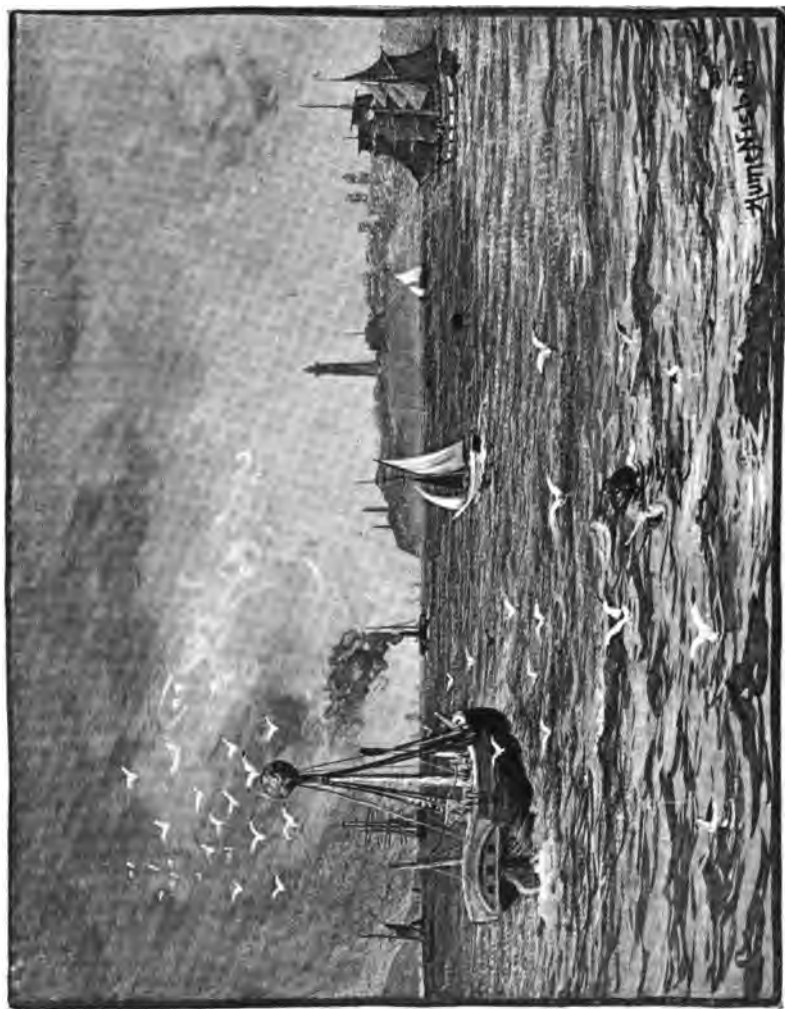
of life to the Assyrians, and the joined serpent with the Egyptians the sign of eternal wisdom and unity ; so the gum tree must ever represent to those who understand its botanical mysteries, omnipotent, all-sufficing, and perfect love, the eternal unity of soul.

Camperdown, a very flourishing market-town, the capital of the chief grazing district of Victoria, nestling at the foot of Mount Leura, and on the main road to Warrnambool from Geelong, is very cleanly, quaint, and sedate, excepting during sheep-shearing season, when it is lively enough.

An aristocratic little town also, supported as it is by the squatter princes of this locality. They are all Conservatives in the Western District, and believe strongly in baronial rights. All round, for one or two hundred miles, the land is flat, rich, and grass-covered—great plains of rolling grasses, with here and there a lake or salt marsh, or a volcanic mountain starting abruptly from the level ground, like an island upon a green ocean.

I made sketches from Rennie Hill of Lake Bullen-Merri, and Mount Noorat, a deep lake with tree-covered hills all about and thick bush between. I also made copies of drawings of Mount Brie-brie, or 'Abrupt,' and Tower Hill Lake, Warrnambool, as I could not go so far west with the limited time at my disposal.

After this I walked about the country, getting extensive reaches of landscape from the Royal Park. Mountains and lakes under a sunny sky, with shadows from the clouds overhead, and foregrounds of woodland, almost English in their characteristics. From the hilltop outside the Botanical Gardens I looked over seventy miles of country, taking in the Grampians and Pyrenees, Mounts Abrupt, Elephant, the Two Cloven Hills, Meningort, Shadwell, and Noorat with three lakes : Gnotuk, Colongulac and Bookar, as lovely an effect as any painter could desire. Gnotuk



PORT PHILLIP HEADS

was in shadow and dark, while the other two glistened like silver in the sunlight, with lap beyond lap of forest or isolated tree-clumps, and over it all a solitary vulture lazily sailing along with almost motionless wings.

Coming back to Camperdown I took a short cut through what looked like a gentleman's park at home. I vaulted over the fence, and was very soon tempted to get out my materials and spread my camp-stool, it was so sylvan, just like a picture by Constable or Gainsborough. Even the bovine interest was not lacking, for there the oxen grazed beneath the spreading trees—a peaceful scene, which calmed me while I sat and made my sketch.

One sulky-looking bull came slowly over from the herd towards me, but stopped short a little distance away, and after gazing upon me for some minutes with stupid curiosity sauntered back to his cows.

After I had finished I crossed the park, and seeing a little fellow standing, in white shirt and trousers, trailing his coat in the dust by the sleeves, I asked him if I was going right for the town. He was a very small boy of about six or seven, with solemn blue eyes, but he answered promptly enough, and directed me all right; after which I thanked him and was going on, when he stopped me by bawling after me:

‘I say, mate, you may thank your blessed stars that you got out of that paddock all right!’

‘How is that, my boy?’ I inquired, turning round.

‘Because that was Mr. Thompson’s mad bull who came up and looked at you, and I was just standing here and watching to see how long he was going to let you sit on that stool of yours. He nearly killed father’s help last week, and he wasn’t half as close to him as you were.’

There was a ring of disappointment in this bright little boy’s voice as he told me of my narrow escape which interested me.

‘So you were watching me, were you?’

‘Yes, I thought there would be some fun, only it didn’t come off.’

‘That was a pity, wasn’t it?’

‘Oh no, someone else may come along presently, and then he may not be so quiet. I am the blacksmith’s son, and live close by, so I can easily wait a bit and see if any one else is coming.’

‘You are a very nice boy!’ I said, as I chucked him under the chin and went on my way, thinking what a blissful state ignorance is sometimes. I had managed to secure my sketch without overmuch disappointing my tiny colonial. As I looked back I saw him still standing on the safe side of the fence, waving his coat in the direction of Mr. Thompson’s mad bull.

We drove to Lara, the station of Mr. John Lang Currie, which I may take as a fairly representative Victorian squatter’s station, so I may as well describe it in passing.

Mr. Currie, like Mr. Dawson, is a Victorian of the genuine old stamp, with an intense love and pride of his adopted land. He is one of the few men who believe in the gum tree, and has planted a perfect forest of blue gums round his homestead, which give to it a secluded aspect and hide its magnificence; for the house has been built after the design of Sir Walter Scott’s house at Melrose—Abbotsford—in blue stone, and cost over 80,000*l.* to build. To give an idea of how the gum tree grows, he showed me some which he had planted in 1851, and which have grown to a height of 150 feet, with nearly eleven feet of circumference.

Lara has all the modern improvements about it in the way of wool-sheds, sheep-pens, washing-ponds, &c. Mr. Currie is a wealthy man, owns a very large run of grazing land here—ground where you may dig ten or twelve feet down and still find rich loam; he has other sheep-runs

and stations in different parts of the colony, but this estate of Lara in extent is larger than many of our English ducal domains. I suppose in the future that his descendants will become dukes and princes also, if Australia does not adopt democracy and abolish titles; at any rate they will have a better right to their lands, seeing that they have purchased instead of stealing them direct. This, perhaps, may go against them if ever they *condescend* to apply for patents of nobility.

After going through the different departments and hearing him describe all the different processes of shearing, pressing, packing, and transporting the wool, we drove over the country to Mount Elephant, which is partly his property, and peculiar as being the youngest extinct volcano in the world. We struggled together up the sides amongst the cinders, lava, and pumice stones, to the top, where a magnificent view of the Western District could be obtained.

As we approached the mountain I saw why it had been named Elephant, and noticed that the resemblance to this animal was perfect. It looked like an elephant couchant, indentations of the mountain showing the large flapping ear, slanting head, small eyes, and the trunk extended along the plain. It is wonderful how Nature at times plays the part of Titan sculptor, and carves colossal statues of animated objects.

It was a stiff climb up to the top, but when there the view was well worth the exertion. What a vista opened up before us!

Beneath our feet, on the one side, the crater, a vast basin, grass-covered and dotted with dwarfed she-oak trees, standing and lying amongst the boulders.

As I looked into it, like a perfect cup, a thought struck me, 'What a splendid reservoir you have here, Mr. Currie! If you could only cement that cavity, roof it over with an

inverted roofing, to protect it from the sun, leaving a hole in the centre, and so preserve all the rains which fall during the wet season, why you could supply the whole district with water, and never run short.'

I made this suggestion to a man who could easily afford to spend a hundred thousand on such a scheme ; it would have been Utopian to ordinary squatters. The very air and superb scenery invigorated my brains, and I grew wilder : 'Or why wait for rain when you can command it from those bulging clouds floating over the land constantly from ocean to ocean ; get great charges of dynamite and make explosions until your gigantic tank is full up, burst the clouds and get all their contents whenever you want water.'

The great conundrum of the colonies was solved. Mr. Currie smiled at my words in an indulgent way, for he had appreciated the manner in which I had shown my colonial experience, by jumping down during our drive and lifting the bars of fences, and was inclined to endure with patience even poetry from me on this Pisgah.

What a panorama spread under us as we looked through the curved she-oak framework of the crater : a vast plain of waving grass, ninety miles in extent, with the little township of Derrinallum lying like an oasis in the middle of a great desert—white specks denoted numberless flocks of sheep ; Lakes Toolenack and Corogamite, both bitter as the Dead Sea, and glistening whitely in the hot sun ; a delicious play of colours over the plain—purples, reds, yellows, interspersed with living green patches ; there lay Warren Hill and Mount Cole, also Lake Logan, with the dried, snow-like brine, and away in the far-off distance, nearly a hundred miles from us, the Victoria Ranges and Mountains of Ararat trembling in the limpid ether, like those delicate washes of the Master, Turner.

I looked hungrily over it all, as Moses might have looked

over the forbidden land. I, the needy writer and artist, standing looking over the possessions of my kindly host the millionaire. I sent out my soul in a heavy sigh, and then turned from that glorious vision to peer into the deep shadows of the crater under my feet, and remember that I had to hurry away.

I was roused from my reverie by the agonised yelping of my host's little terrier, who had been pursuing a rabbit over the other side of the mountain. Overhead careered a huge eagle, who was coming nearer the dog every wide circle he made; we could not see the dog, but from his horrified yelpings we knew that he saw his enemy.

At this moment a shot rang out, and the king of birds darted up towards the blue vault without his victim. 'Sandy,' the terrier, was saved, and shortly afterwards joined us, in a state of abject humility, with his saviour, one of the rabbit-hunters, gun on shoulder.

'A bad shot, sir,' he observed as we met; 'but it served its purpose.'

CHAPTER XIV

WESTERN DISTRICT OF VICTORIA

Birregurra and Colac—A Drive to Lorne—Black and Tiger Snakes—
Walk through Cape Otway Forest.

THEY say that all good Americans when they die go to Paris. I fondly trust, if I am good enough in this life, after I pass away (for I have almost relinquished the hope during life) that I may be allowed to haunt Birregurra.

‘Don’t bother about Birregurra,’ my friends said; ‘spend what time you may have at Colac, which is worth a visit. See its Free Library and Town-hall, the rabbit-preserving factory, and the house of the man who introduced these interesting specimens into Victoria.’ It is the habit of pious Moslems to turn towards Mecca when they mutter their prayers; in Victoria it is the custom of all true squatters to turn towards this unpretentious building when they mutter their prayers—and fervent prayers they are, too. ‘See the bacon-curing, salt-works and fruit-preserving factories, and our grand freshwater lake, Colac, which is nearly 7,000 acres in extent, and delicious water; don’t miss that by any means.’

I didn’t miss Colac, or its lake; but though I hurried over it I made my sketches conscientiously. Somehow, Birregurra had got hold of my imagination by some occult power, and I felt feverish until I had deposited my sketching-bag and minute bundle of change of flannels in the



BUSH FIRE



sweetly pure bedroom assigned for my use by Mrs. Pengilly, Royal Mail Hotel, Birregurra. I had reached my well in the wilderness. I looked round, and felt balmy peace at last steal over me.

Birregurra is not yet a town. It is ten thousand times better—it is the most perfect sylvan village in the whole of Victoria, built as it is on the banks of the Barwon River, surrounded by gentle hills and valleys, all deliciously wooded; and the inhabitants are as nice as the place is beautiful.

From here the tourist can get to Lorne or Cape Otway. He will pass through the great forest of Otway, and get glimpses of ranges, gulleys, fern-trees, and gigantic old gums, such as he can never wipe from the slate of his memory.

I spent two days, early and late, going round the neighbourhood of this heart-solacing village. There was a bush-fire burning in the forest at the time. It had started hereabouts, so that in portions it did not appear at its best, with the blackened, gaunt trunks in air, and smouldering ashes under foot. Still, there were patches which the flames had passed over, and where Nature was prodigal in her display of original gardening.

At nights we saw the red reflection of the blazing forest, and here and there jets of lurid flame bursting out at unexpected places, while all the air was ambrosial with the pungent odour of burning gum-leaves.

I believe it is the duty of everyone who sees a rabbit or a snake to kill them, if possible, and I have been told that one can be punished for wantonly allowing any of the pests to escape. Let me confess it, now that I am beyond the reach of the Victorian laws, I could not make up my mind to disturb those happy and innocent-looking families, which gathered each night and morning so unsuspiciously on the banks of the Barwon, as I sat sketching amongst the ferns and the wild flowers.

They have the colour and general appearance of our wild rabbits, only they are about three times the size ; while they are so daring and tame that one hardly requires traps to snare them—they almost wait to be lifted up, and either petted or knocked on the neck. Competition, I suppose, makes them reckless. As I sat quietly amongst them, they came out of their holes by thousands, sat up on their hind legs, and washed their faces like tame cats. The entire bank appeared to be covered with them ; so that when I made a movement, and they for a moment scurried off, it seemed as if the ground was animated, and rushing away from me. No man need starve in the bush, for he has only to sit for a few moments still, and his supper or breakfast will jump into his arms.

What a massacre goes on amongst these mischievous innocents to supply the factory at Colac, without making any decrease in their numbers ! The Government gives sixpence per tail for every one that is brought to them, and the hunter must be very indolent who cannot snare his hundred or two per day ; I think he gets another sixpence for the body from the factory : so that, while bunnies swarm in the Colony, if a man chooses to walk about the streets of the towns in rags, it is his own fault entirely, not the fault of the country.

While the earth is so well plenished with animated Nature, the trees about this part literally cluster with cockatoos and parrots. How they chatter and scream, as they fly about in dense clouds from branch to branch ! The parrots and parrakeets dash about in a disconnected way, flashing their gay colours in the sunlight, while the cockatoos soar like a regiment of white-uniformed soldiers in a compact British square.

‘Mountjoy’ is the man who takes me from Birregurra to Lorne. His coaches are one of the institutions of the

district. His sons—fine young men—are the boldest and wildest drivers in existence, so that the drive to Mountjoy's Hotel passes like a delirium of excitement and pleasure. Our driver cracks his whip as the jolly 'Wellers' of the past must have done, and his team of well-groomed horses are off with a plunge, leaving a whirlwind of dust behind them.

On, on at full speed through the main street of Birregurra, over the Barwon, along the wooded country to Dean's Marsh, getting flying views of dead trees, upstarting grim and ghastly, white and jet black, and spreading their stark branches in every direction where man has killed them, or the fires have passed amongst them, shrivelling the life out of them, and leaving them standing like spectres of winter in a summer land.

I sit on the front seat, beside young Mountjoy, and listen to his descriptions and names of places as we pass. He is strongly interested in the wild strokes I am making in my sketch-book, and offers sometimes to slacken pace or stop so that I may have more time. But I say, 'No, go on full speed,' as my pencil is doing; for I have accustomed myself to taking sketches from the windows of express trains, and a stage-coach, even under the guidance of Mountjoy, is leisure to that.

We stop to take dinner at the half-way house—'Dean's Marsh'—and wash the dust out of our throats with the colonial beverage, 'tea,' and then we are off once more with fresh horses—this time all up hill—and into the forest, with all the solemnity of forest scenery upon us.

Up, up—we are almost walking now, for it is stiff work for the horses. Great trees which almost meet over our heads, with that red, dust-laden bush-road beneath, and every now and then a glance into a mighty fern-tree gulley, with delicious blue, trembling distances beyond.

Now it is Colac, and Camperdown, with the lakes and mountains of Buninyong and You Yangs beyond. Purple ranges, sometimes sombre, sometimes glittering with sunshine, for the sky above is diversified with summer clouds, snow-white, with velvety shadow sides, through which the sunbeams drift from valley to mountain, every instant changing in effect.

We have gained the top of the range, and now prepare to descend. A few minutes of breathing-time, and then, once more, with a flick over the ears of the leader, we dash down pell-mell, like the style in which we used to imagine Jehu dashed into Jericho, only, like many of our other early fallacies, we have found out that Jehu's driving was known principally from its military precision and sedateness. No matter; we drove as we used to suppose Jehu drove, with a rush, a hanging and mighty cloud of dust obscuring us, and making us all like red Indians, straight down the mountain, reckless of horses' knees or passengers' necks, right into Lorne, bringing up at the hotel with a magnificent flourish. How glad I feel now that I left my collars and neckties behind!

Mountjoy's Hotel, at Lorne, is arranged on the system of our Hydropathics at home—that is, the visitors are treated as guests, introduced all round, and expected to help to make things social. There were a considerable number of visitors the night I spent there, but I must say none of them showed by the slightest sign that I was the less welcome amongst them because of my bushranger- or sun-downer-like get-up. Although I was the only person present who was not dressed in fashionable attire, they were all hearty and free, the young ladies particularly, who came over and examined my sketch-book with as much interest as if I had been the most exquisitely got-up young masher, with a well-known reputation for wealth, instead of

the rough and shabby-looking globe-trotter that I am. This says more than seems at first sight for their sensible bringing up and the future of this independent colony.

Lorne is by the sea, in the centre of a crescent-shaped bay, with lofty ranges all round it, and bold headlands beyond. The Erskine River runs through it and into the sea.

There are curious rocks about this coast, some standing up like mushrooms on a large scale, some like strange monsters or animals.



The Veiled Mary Rock, Lorne
Victoria

I make a sketch of Eagle Point, with the wreck of the 'Sunrise' at my feet as a foreground. This ship had gone ashore on the sands, and all that now remained of it were the ribs, standing out of the surf and seaweed like the skeleton of some gigantic whale.

Here are to be found some of the most lovely-shaped and tinted shells; indeed, the shore glistens with the tender and prismatic hues of these shells. I could not resist wasting an hour picking up some of the beautiful specimens.

I also saw a most singular headland here—a projecting

rock, which looked like the head of a harpy, with parrot-like, sharp nose, thin lips, and pointed chin ; even the cruel-looking eye was there ; and, what was most remarkable, the tracings of the rock formed what looked exactly like a transparent veil tightly drawn over half the face and nose. I got near it ; but the likeness was all the more striking the nearer one got—a perfectly-proportioned bit of Nature's carving on a large scale, and one of the cruellest and most fatal faces I ever looked at. Finding that it hadn't a name, I called it 'The Veiled Fury,' as it would be to any luckless vessel which might be driven ashore on those flinty breasts during a storm.

This is a bad district for snakes. I went up the Erskine River to make some sketches of the picturesque turns and miniature waterfalls which greeted one at every little distance. While sitting quietly beside a deep brown pool, with a rock behind me, against which I leaned, I was startled by a slight flop almost at my feet, and raising my eyes saw a large tiger-snake glide slowly and gracefully along the flat rocks towards the pool, into which he disappeared.

Another few minutes passed, when I saw another of the species slowly drop its limp length out of a hole almost over my head, and pursue the same even tenor of its way. I was growing nervous at the vicinity of such deadly neighbours, but wanted to finish my sketch, so hurried up. Again I was startled by a slight rustle, and to my horror observed a black snake about eight or nine feet in length glide between the legs of my camp-stool. It was too much ; I leapt to my feet suddenly, with an exclamation which must have frightened the reptile very greatly, for with a lightning spring he flopped into the pool with a splash ; I had been sitting so quietly that they had not noticed that I was an enemy. After that I got up, and folded my stool, leaving the one corner of my sketch to be finished from memory. The

black and tiger snakes are nearly as venomous in their bite as the cobra.

Next morning I started to walk back through the forest. What a soul-inspiring walk that was, like passing through the pillars of some mighty cathedral, mile after mile and hour after hour, without meeting a soul, in an intense stillness only broken up now and again by the unearthly bursts of laughter from that useful friend of the settler, the Australian kingfisher and snake-exterminator, called the 'laughing jackass.'

Gum trees rising two hundred feet high, with boles in some places fifteen feet in diameter; straight trunks with the bark swinging from them in tattered shards, like the rags about a wind-battered scarecrow, spread out one behind the other like ivory pillars, and seemingly without a termination, while underneath the young wattles, acacias, and blue-gum shoots spring up, spreading out leaves all violet, like the bloom upon a ripe plum, and filling the forest with aromatic fragrance.

It was the coupling season with the snakes, when they are most daring and savage; so I took care, as I sat down to rest and draw, to beat the ground well, for they infest the Otway Forest. But the day passed without any exciting incident.

Then the evening fell, and I grew anxious to meet someone who might tell me how far off I was from Love's house, where I meant to pass the night.

A beautiful effect of sunset, the sky all ruddy and bronzy, lighting up the tops of the trees like red gold, while the under parts were in deep shadow; then the solemn afterglow, in which a reflected light came into the forest, making the ivory trunks gleam out like fleshly limbs, ghostly and weird. It seemed an enchanted forest.

As I trudged along, keeping well in the middle of the

red bush-track—which I could just define from the dark green sides—partly as precaution against the snakes, who I knew took night for their courting, partly that I might not wander and get lost in the bush, I heard the clatter of horse's hoofs, and presently a rider loomed up.

'Did you see a couple of horses along this way?' he asked me; upon which I answered: 'Yes, they passed me during the afternoon, and must be near Lorne by this time.' Then I asked in turn: 'Am I right for Love's?'

'Yes, straight on about two miles farther;' and then he disappeared, and I went on my way.

This ghostly effect of afterglow changed to more direct twilight as the night advanced—a stormy twilight, with dark crimson clouds chasing one another over the upper space in wild confusion. About a mile beyond where I left the rider I heard the sound of axes upon trees, and soon came upon some woodmen felling the last tree for the night, their camp-fires blazing merrily, and their tents standing near; then another stiff mile of climbing, with the night upon the forest and the stars shining out between the clouds; over that black canopy; and next the lamp-lit window of Love's hut gleams in sight, and I drag myself wearily up to the door and claim shelter for the night.

CHAPTER XV

CAPE OTWAY FOREST

The Selector and his Family—All about Snakes—An Advice to Socialists—A Horrible Night—Mr. Milder of Geelong—Queenscliff and War Preparations.

MR. LOVE was not at home when I got there, but his wife and daughter received me hospitably, and shortly afterwards he came in to supper. I had passed him in the forest amongst the woodcutters, where his sons were then working and camping-out.

After supper, while we sat at the fire smoking our pipes, I asked him about the snakes and their habits.

‘Yes, they are bad about this quarter, particularly black and tiger snakes; and this is their worst time for biting, when they are coupling. They lie about the *middle of the roads* all through the night, rolling amongst the warm sand and dust, and that is where the danger lies principally to travellers.’

And I, once more, in my blessed ignorance, had taken the middle of the road for safety!

‘You’ll find them mostly twisted together like a double-snake walking-stick, with their heads quite close. When you disturb them they spring apart and go for you like lightning, for they are most active now, and extra savage; at other times they will try to get away if they can.’

‘Did you ever see a female snake swallowing her young?’

‘Yes, I think I have; at least, I have seen the mother open her mouth, and the young ones disappear; and I know a man who studies their habits, and he says they always do this when they fear danger. But, Lord bless you! we think nothing of snakes hereabout. We see too much of them; they are all over the place, and our pigs kill and eat them wholesale. Pigs are the very best snake-exterminators going; they grub them out, and bolt them down greedily. I don’t think that snake-poison hurts pigs: and as for us, the cure is quite simple—keep a sharp knife and a piece of string always in your pocket, and if you are bitten just tie the string tightly round the part, and cut a chunk of flesh out, then suck the blood for a bit, and there is no fear.’

It sounded all so easy, with the exception of that ‘chunk of flesh’—that was what struck me as the disagreeable part of the performance as I listened to his cure.

‘My daughter there is nearly as good as a pig with the snakes; if she once gets a sight at them, they are gone snakes in no time. She likes hunting for them.’

I gazed at the young lady with intense admiration; she looked modest and pretty enough for anything, as she held down her head shyly at her parent’s praises, while the fire-light played over her features, causing a rosy blush.

‘We don’t always object to snakes either, for they are capital micers and vermin-destroyers. Now, we have a big black snake which lives somewhere about the shingles, and who goes all over the house, after we get to bed, hunting the mice and rats; you may happen to hear him to-night, if he isn’t out coupling.’

What a sweetly pleasant prospect that was! I remembered how fond snakes are of heat, and how they sometimes like to get into bed with people that are asleep.

Although I made no remark, I felt no undue haste to go to bed, tired though I was with my long tramp. I wasn't quite so used to snakes as the fair young lady opposite.

Then we began to talk about himself and his bush-farm, for he was a selector.

'The Government will not sell the land outright, which is good for people not too well off. They sell ground here at 1*l.* per acre on a twenty years' purchase contract; we pay 1*s.* per acre for twenty years, and then it is ours, with 5*l.* or 6*l.* for the surveyor's fees for coming to peg it out—quite easy terms, which need not hurt any one; only the condition is that we occupy and improve the ground during the twenty years. I have been here for six years, and have cleared enough in that time to be able to live on it. In ten years' time I can put money in the bank, and by the time the land is our own I expect that we shall be flourishing, for it is splendid land, and I have as much of it as many of our nobility at home.'

'But meanwhile, Mr. Love?'

'My sons and I take jobs for Government, making roads, as most of the selectors do; that's what they are up to now. Half a dozen selectors are in the gang down there, felling the trees and sorting the roads along with my sons. We can make enough by contract-work, in a couple of months per year, to buy seed, and we spend the rest of the time at our own property.'

Democrats of England! Socialists! Has it ever occurred to you that whilst you are fighting the landowners in that little paddock of meagre, starved-out soil called Britain, that there are hundreds of thousands of acres lying fallow, ready for the axe, pickaxe, and spade, all over Australia—particularly in the northern portions of Queensland? Do you know that whilst you are thinking to solve the problem by raising the wages and forming unions of those

men who, in spite of all your patriotic and benevolent efforts in their behalf, are starving in London, the Australian Government is only too ready to employ their labour in making roads and railroads, and is willing to grant them lordly heritages for their children on these beneficent terms ?

I asked my host many other questions about a selector's life ; but at last I had to go to bed, for I could see he was dead-beat with sleep, and yawning horribly. The hostess and her daughter had long before retired to their rooms ; so, taking my candle from him, I, with foreboding heart, shut myself in alone so far as humanity was concerned.

Was that accursed representative of the tempter of Mother Eve in possession of the apartment, and preparing for his nightly peregrinations ? I wondered, as I held out the candle, and peered into the deep darkness, examining each portion of the floor before setting my foot down, and looking all round and under the bed carefully ; but no glistening jetty yard or two of loathsomeness met my gaze. I took off the bedclothes and pillows to make sure that it was not coiled up amongst or under them ; and then, with only a half-satisfied soul, I put my candle upon the table, undressed myself hastily, plunged into bed, and blew out the light.

How long I lay there shivering, anticipating horror, I can hardly tell ; but at last I must have dropped asleep, for I woke up all at once with a wild start and the instantaneous feeling that it was with me. In which part ? In what frame of mind ? Ye gods ! ten ghosts at my bedside, all pointing fleshless fingers at me, and glaring out of phosphorescent but sightless eyeholes, would have been warmly welcomed rather than this silent horror.

I lay motionless, listening. It might be on the bed or under the pillow, or amongst my clothes on the chair, or ornamentally curled round my candlestick, just where a

movement from me might excite it, and make it take the fatal leap. Again, awful thought! I had forgotten to put my matches on the table, and could not remember whether I had left them in the kitchen or put them into my pocket. The wild confusion of fear, speculation, and suspense was awful as I lay there, like an embalmed mummy, with strained ears and bristling hair.

At last I heard it, 'flop, slide, flop, flop!' and then a pause—to be again repeated at different parts of the room. It was hunting, I could hear, in the deep darkness, watching patiently for its victims, now and again making the leap, and landing on the floor, with the soft rebound and rustle of an indiarubber tube covered with silk.

Ah! those matches; where were they? Yet, even if they had been at hand, I dare not strike them, for it had the advantage of me, as it could see in the dark, and might be watching me as well as the other vermin (I could not regard myself in any other light, for I felt as meanly demoralised and fascinated as any miserable mouse or cockroach who then may have been crouching under the influence of those basilisk orbs).

So I lay, cold, clammy, and cramped, the shadow of death upon me, wondering how the young lady in the other room would have acted under the circumstance; thinking of the piece of cord, and the 'chunk of flesh' to be cut out promptly; feeling as if it had been extracted, now from my thigh or biceps, now from other parts—all tender parts of my composition; too fearful to move a finger, too much ashamed of my own blank cowardice to yell out for help, although the yell hovered on my lips, and had to be kept back with a wild effort; knowing, at last, the sensations which men have felt whose hair has become bleached in an hour.

Was it an hour, or many, that I lay listening to those

softly-caressing, silken floppings, with the long pauses between, before oblivion stole upon me? I don't know; but I only know that at last I drifted into unconsciousness of my misery, to wake up with the early light of morning stealing in and making objects discernible.

I woke lying on my back, and so the first spot I saw was a stain on the rafters directly above me—woke with my faculties all acute and memory active.

Had it gone, or where was it now? For a moment or two I lay motionless, not daring to shift even my head. To my imagination it seemed as if a light weight rested about the region of my stomach—the Devil's representative coiled up after its midnight amusement, on the coverlet. Slowly, cautiously, I turned my eyes down my nose, to find the view impeded by the blanket round my neck. Another moment of suspense. Then I raised my head from the neck only, and looked towards my toes; nothing there. I then turned my eyes to the outside, letting them range over all within vision; nothing yet. A little higher, and I could see portions of the floor; it was free. Then, with a sudden resolution, I made up my mind, and with an energetic effort gave one leap into the middle of the room which would have delighted the heart of a professional acrobat.

Daintily I approached the bed, my folded camp-stool in hand, and examined it all once again, as I had done the night before, without finding my room-fellow. Gingerly I handled each article of clothing, as I picked it up and shook it before putting it on, and not until I had left the house a hundred or so of yards behind me did I manage to shake off the horrors of the night and pull myself together.

'I hope you slept well last night,' observed my host when we met at breakfast.

'Splendidly,' I replied, cheerily.

‘ Did you hear the snake ? ’ asked the young lady, looking up from her teacup.

‘ Yes, I fancied that I did hear something,’ I replied, nonchalantly, as I went on calmly with my breakfast.

I spent some little time, before leaving Mr. Love, going over his estate, and looking at the improvements which he had made in six years—not a great deal to look at, for the gum-tree is a giant who cannot be cleared or cut down all at once. No saw can get through its vast circumference when full grown, and even if felled it would do more mischief by incumbering the ground than if left standing, so they ring it—*i.e.*, cut the bark about a foot all round close to the root, and thus let it slowly die. A melancholy sight these giants are in their bleached ghastliness, standing up leafless, and throwing out great protesting, naked limbs. But if a man wants to cultivate his ground they must be sacrificed.

Yet the day is coming when the selector will be glad to farm these medicine-trees, instead of ringing them for less profitable crops. He will be glad to keep the forests as Nature has given them to him, and occupy himself with gathering the leaves and extracting the valuable juices from them. Then the selector will not have to wait his twenty years for prosperity, but will begin to put money in the bank the first month he occupies the land.

When a great gum-tree is killed, the selector lights a fire at its roots, and allows it to burn slowly away. This is how he clears his ground now. By-and-by they will be able to get large enough saws to cut the trees ; then they can sell their spare timber for firewood, which will be a much more profitable game than digging for gold or coal in the bowels of the earth.

I went with Mr. Love through his fern-gulley, where a clear stream of water purled down. What a conservatory

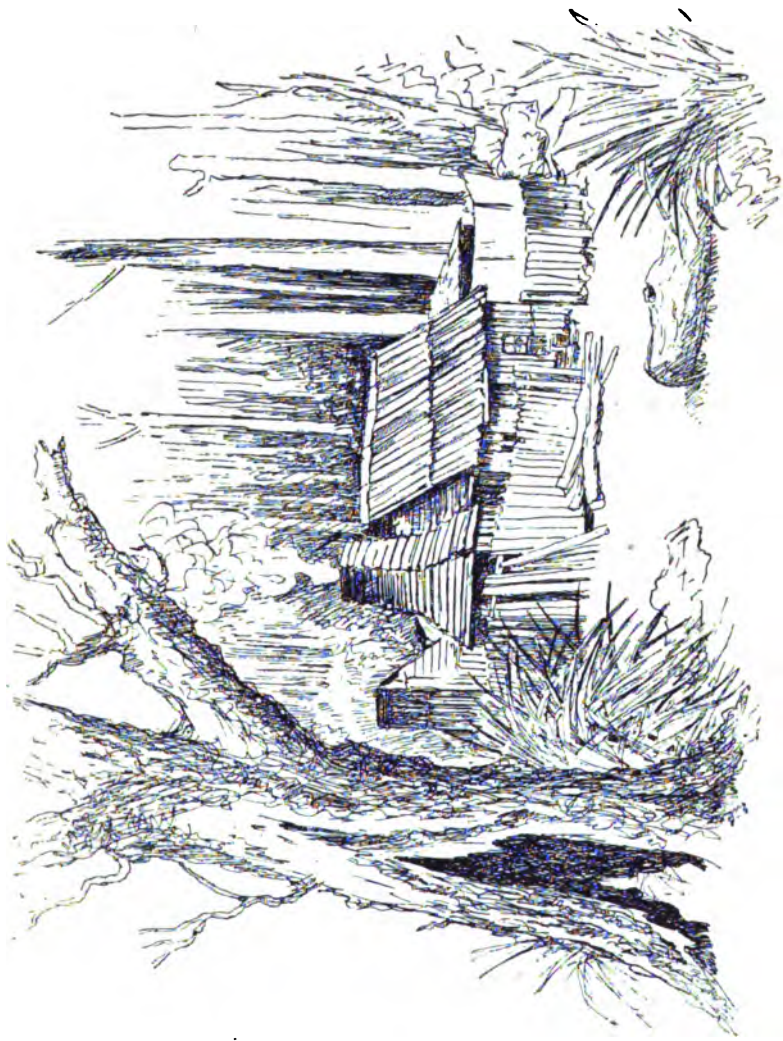
of loveliness that was, with those natural umbrellas rising over our heads, and making a perpetual twilight of cool greenery, with the rich lustre and sienna fronds and stumps, like our boyish visions of the Garden of Eden! What a paradise for the painter and poet this primæval forest is! There is nothing like it in our artificial, high-paid-for groves, grottoes, and fashionable conservatories—nothing like it in the tinsel world of civilisation. Here Nature has done her utmost in the way of beauty and repose.

After leaving Mr. Love, my road lay all downhill, so that it was easy work, with a sunny day, and plenty of woodland effects every mile of the way.

I was taking a rest and a sketch about half-way down, when two men came on the scene with fowling-pieces on their shoulders. They were a father and son, who had taken up a selection, and were out in the forest, hunting—rough-looking fellows, with clothes bepatched in a homely way, with patches of every known shade, which sight so gladdened my democratic soul that I hailed them, and made them sit down beside me and take part of the lunch which Mrs. Love had provided me with.

Then we got on the talk, and I found that my acquaintance was a Mr. Milder, of Geelong, a man of great refinement and taste—a good artist, a sweet musician, a naturalist, and now a selector, all for the love of the life. This is the sort of thing you experience in the Colonies constantly.

After our *al fresco* lunch Mr. Milder took me to his house and estate, and showed me over it. He also showed me his fine collection of stuffed Australian birds. Being an artist as well as a naturalist, he had stuffed these with a due regard to their characters and importance, so that the birds seemed to live once more on their branches. His tastes ran to orchard-growing, and he let me taste some of the first-fruits of his garden—for he was now in his fourth year as a selector



A SELECTOR'S HUT



—apples which melted in the mouth, with a fragrance and flavour unsurpassed. Who would not be a selector in Victoria, if his fate debarred him from becoming a squatter ?

Before returning to Melbourne, previous to taking the New South Wales route *viâ* Ballarat and Deniliquin, I paid a visit from Geelong to Queenscliff, Port Phillip Heads, and the fortifications there. I went with Mr. Bell, the superintendent of the defence works, and viewed all their preparations for resisting a future enemy. I don't think any foreign power will be foolhardy enough to attack the Australian colonies, but it is best to be prepared.

And they are fully prepared in Victoria, with line within line of torpedoes. Woe to the unlucky warship which attempts to get inside Port Phillip Heads after war is declared. At Queenscliff they have a little office where a sedate man sits, like a telegraph-clerk, before a row of little ivory knobs on a table. Electric bells are placed in front of him as he sits, pensively, waiting.

The warship is telegraphed as within sight, and the gentle operator is all ready with his infernal instruments. A bell sounds—No. 1. The warship has just touched the connecting wire, and is passing over the first line of volcanic eruptions. The operator merely presses the knob of No. 1 on the table, and that is all he knows about it in the seclusion of his quiet little office. Outside the Heads, ten or twelve miles away, the invading warship is flying into thin air, a thousand splinters, with the hundreds of warlike spirits soaring to Hades.

Or, supposing the vessel clears the first line, and those aboard realise the danger they have passed as they see the ocean burst up behind them like a waterspout, there is no return for them. The quiet operator sits and listens for the next tinkle of the bell, with his forefinger on knob No. 2.

If it sounds he is ready, and no steam can carry them over quick enough before they are blown up this time. Besides, he has a long row of figures and knobs before him to press down, if needful, for the protection of Port Phillip. And this is how science has advanced and modern warfare is conducted—one telegraph-operator against a whole Armada.

CHAPTER XVI

TOWARDS NEW SOUTH WALES

The Gold-yielding Districts—Ballarat—The Eureka Stockade—The Revolt of 1854—Mr. McIntyre's Theory of Gold—A Modern Representation of Jerusalem.

I took this route intending to go through the gold-digging districts to Deniliquin, Jerilderie, and Wagga Wagga, and so on towards Sydney; but I found at Deniliquin a telegram requesting me to return to Melbourne, and go to New Zealand, so that I had to hurry through the places faster than I would like to have done otherwise.

I did not go to New Zealand, because of my letter, which I sent before me, asking if the rainy season, just commencing over there, had been taken into consideration. It had not, so that my original plans were allowed to be carried through (with slight interruptions)—to go northward, and so escape the rains of Australia. Having been before in the country, I had studied all these points particularly, so that no time would be wasted.

Ballarat, a native name signifying 'the place of rest,' is the leading gold-field of Victoria, and the next most important town after Melbourne. It was in 1851 that gold was first discovered here, at a spot called Golden Point, which caused a wild rush to be made from all parts of the Colony, and in a month's time it changed its quiet pastoral character to pandemonium, with over ten thousand diggers, of

all classes of society, changed from peaceful settlers into fevered gnomes. Then came the finds at Mount Alexander and Bendigo. There were some very large nuggets found here—the 'Welcome Nugget,' 2,217 ounces, and 'The Welcome Stranger,' 2,280 ounces.

The Government sent to this new field their Commissioners, who exacted as a license-fee for each digger 30s. per month, which in two months time they doubled, in spite of the grumbling of the diggers at the exorbitant charges. The great and needless severity with which these charges were enforced afterwards produced consequences which will be ever memorable in the history of Victoria.

One night a digger called Scobie knocked roughly at the door of an hotel kept by one Bentley, at Ballarat; this was in 1854. Finding the place closed, he tried to force his way in, while Bentley, enraged, rushed out to fight him.

In the crowd and darkness Scobie was killed by a stroke of a spade. Although no one could swear to the murderer, Bentley was arrested and tried, but afterwards acquitted by the police-magistrate, Mr. Dewes, who was said to be, secretly, his partner in business.

The other diggers, savage at the unpunished murder of their companion, Scobie, gathered round Bentley's Hotel, broke into it, demolished the inside, and beat off the few policemen who tried to stop them. Then they set fire to the place, seeing that they could not find Bentley, who had escaped on horseback, and then quietly dispersed.

For this outrage three diggers—Fletcher, McIntyre, and Weatherly—were apprehended, taken to Melbourne, and sentenced to imprisonment; Bentley was also re-arrested, and sentenced to three years' hard labour on the roads; while Dewes was dismissed from the post he had occupied.

The Governor, Sir Charles Hotham, did all he could to conciliate the diggers, but without success. They sent three

deputies—Kennedy, Humphrey, and Black—to demand the release of McIntyre and his friends, to avoid a riot. Their demand was politely refused, and the Executive began to collect all their forces and send them to Ballarat. On the Geelong road a party of the 40th Regiment was attacked by the people, whom they charged and drove with loss into their camp; the same day another detachment was severely beaten at a place called Eureka, out of Ballarat.

Next day a monster meeting was held by the inflamed diggers, when resolutions were passed denouncing the obnoxious license-fee, and declaring that they would no longer pay it. They also strongly protested against bodies of armed soldiers marching about the diggings and firing on the people without first reading the Riot Act, and also moved and carried the motion that a Reform League be established—all members of it protected—and that they would henceforth adjust any dispute relating to claims by arbitrators chosen from themselves only.

The Government officials proceeded to further extremities, and sent more soldiers, so that several skirmishes took place; while the diggers resolved that nothing short of a full concession of their rights from Government would now satisfy them. The Australian flag—blue with a white cross—was hoisted, a Provisional Government formed, and supplies levied in its name; while camps were formed on both sides, with barricades of sandbags, and a civil war declared.

On the night of December 1—two nights after the meeting—lights were seen in the tents of the diggers, signals passed, and shots were fired at the sentries, who were driven in; the spies reported that the insurgents were drilling, arming, and forming themselves into companies.

Next day Commissioner Amos brought the news to Ballarat that the diggers had entrenched themselves at Eureka Camp in force, with the intention of intercepting

the troops hourly expected from Melbourne under the command of the Major-General. It was to be fighting now in earnest. Right against authority, they had chosen their 'Minister of War,' and gave his draft-orders in return for the contributions which they levied on all classes.

Captain Thomas, the officer in command of the troops, determined, if possible, to take the camp by surprise, and end the affair by a grand *coup* before the arrival of the Major-General. All Saturday he remained passive, as if waiting for reinforcements. The diggers, thrown off their guard by these false signs of peace, had left the camp with only a few comparatively to watch, and many of these even, it being Saturday night, had been drinking heavily, and so were quite unprepared.

As a British soldier, with thoroughly-equipped men, against British subjects who had just taken to the business of war on what they considered their rights as men, and who were not either organised or armed properly, this grand *coup* of Captain Thomas's cannot be written about or remembered as either a brave or a noble stratagem, no matter how successful it was. He fixed upon the Indian hour of attack—the hour when men sleep most heavily—to steal upon the unsuspecting and nearly deserted camp.

It is not known exactly how many diggers were in the Eureka Stockade at the time, but they have been roughly estimated at about a couple of hundred strong; while the Queen's troops, military and police, numbered two hundred and seventy-six.

The Stockade rested on a slight hill, and was of considerable strength; but it was too large, and not protected by proper outworks to aid the defenders in a general assault, so that it was an easy matter for the soldiers to steal right up into the camp before they were perceived. Yet, for all that,

the indomitable pluck of the diggers would have repulsed the military hirelings had they been given the fair chance of war, and not taken at such a decided disadvantage, and at such a time.

It was Sunday morning, and day was just beginning to break, when the attack was made ; Amos, the Commissioner, who knew the camp well, acted as guide. When the troops got to about three hundred yards distance from the entrenchments, detachments of the 12th and 40th Regiments, under Captains Quendo and Wise, extended in skirmishing order, while the mounted force moved to the left to take the rear of the insurgents. Then the main body advanced to the attack.

It was begun and ended in twenty-five minutes, that battle of the misty grey dawn. The sleeping diggers sprang to their feet the instant the alarm was sounded, and rushed manfully to their posts, pouring a heavy volley from revolvers and rifles as they ran forward to meet their assaulters, killing twelve of the front rank, and making the whole body waver for a moment.

Then the military recovered themselves, and advanced steadily, right upon the Stockade, firing volley after volley as they came on, and picking off the diggers wherever they showed themselves. Lalor, one of the leaders, was shot down almost at once, as he rose above a sandbag to direct his men, and left for dead where he fell ; the other leader, Vern (a German), had somehow disappeared, and could not afterwards be found.

They fought well, those untrained diggers ; it took the disciplined assaulters twenty of the twenty-five minutes before they could get over the palisades ; after that, five minutes finished up the fight.

Twenty minutes of constant blazing away of rifles and revolvers, the din waking up the cockatoos in the forest an

hour before their usual time, and sending them screaming away in a state of high excitement at this most unaccustomed sound, while the roadways outside and the Stockade within became lined with dead and dying soldiers and diggers.

Then an ominous pause and silence before the loud command of 'Charge!' was heard, and with a rush the soldiers were over the banks, with bayonets piercing the bodies of the resisting diggers, who fought like heroes, hand to hand, with what implements they could snatch up—shovels and pickaxes against bayonets—for the remaining five minutes; after which, all who could run turned, and dived down the empty claims for refuge, only to be caught like rabbits in their holes when daylight grew strong enough to let them be seen.

So the Eureka Stockade was taken, and the Ballarat Riots finished up.

The tents were burnt; and as the other insurgents came straggling up to help their beaten friends, they were captured and sent off to Melbourne; 125 prisoners were packed off there for trial. However, to the glory of the Colony, no jury could be found in the land to convict them, notwithstanding the frantic efforts of the Crown lawyers to bring in the verdict high treason. The sympathy of the people was with the diggers and their just claims. They were, one by one, acquitted and set free by the citizen-jury of Melbourne.

A negro was the first put upon his trial, and liberated, while the court and crowded streets re-echoed with the wild cheering of the excited spectators, two of whom were seized and sentenced to seven days' imprisonment for this open contempt of court by the enraged Chief Justice. But this despotic attempt of Government to interfere with the liberties of colonials was defeated, while the universal

sympathy of the people saved the land from a revolution ; for although the Australian may be a peace-loving, loyal subject, who even professes to be Conservative in his politics, he has a temper which will not put up with the slightest appearance of oppression, as a friend informed me the other night when speaking to a redhot Tory Australian about the politics of the Colonies. 'Yes, we are all mostly Conservatives, because we have never yet felt the yoke ; but if it ever came to press upon us in the slightest degree, then we would throw it off without a pause.'

This is, I suppose, what the Fourth Party mean by 'Conservative Democracy ;' and a splendid definition of sound and manly politics it is.

I spent six weeks in the company of Mr. McIntyre, one of the three riot leaders of Ballarat, during the voyage home. He gave me much of the information which I have written. As he represented the diggers then, at Bentley's Hotel and in Melbourne prison, so he still represents them as their member in Parliament. He is somewhat of the temperament of the Dockers' leader, John Burns, and is also a forcible speaker, and as ready still to lead on physically as he was when a young man, thirty-five years of age. He has had great experience of gold-digging, and is one of the best authorities on the subject.

We had many a long chat on deck, while smoking our pipes, about old days, gold, and the future of the Colonies as a gold-field. He believes that the alluvial days are over, even the moderate quartz-digging, yet is as firmly convinced that the gold which has been taken out of Australia already is nothing to what will be discovered in future, as scientific knowledge and long experience can with reason make him.

'We have been, up to this time, working too close to the surface, and hitherto have only got the thin end of the

vein,' he said. 'I will show you how it is. You know gold the heaviest of all metals, and at the time it got mixed with the quartz all was in a state of fusion; now, what would be the inevitable result of the cooling of this fused conglomeration?'

'Why, the weightiest would sink to the bottom, of course,' I replied.

'Exactly; that is what has taken place. The gold settled down in the form of a pyramid, with the thin end topmost, and the bulk at the bottom; and that is where we'll find it, when we can afford to sink our shafts deep enough. We must go right down, down through all the breaks, until we come to the base of the pyramid.'

Ballarat is a magnificent town, and would be beautiful, with its hilly surroundings, only for the excavated quarries and mounds of quartz powder which lie about the mouths of the shafts which pierce it everywhere. It is completely honeycombed with shafts, and may be called a town above an underground city of arches and streets innumerable.

It was Sunday morning when I took my first walk about it—a soft, hazy morning, when everything looked etherealised and visionary, with that silvery mist hanging over it, and those warm sun-rays filtering through the tender film.

At my feet lay an old claim filled with water, and looking like a lake. The Town-hall tower and other lofty buildings and stacks appeared to be Oriental domes, so that I could not keep back the idea that I was overlooking Jerusalem, for the trees in the gardens took on the shadows of cypress trees—Jerusalem on that Sunday morning, nineteen centuries ago, when Mary found the stone rolled away from the tomb. I gazed onwards to see Calvary, and lo! it met my eyes. On the distant ranges beyond I saw a bare mount,

treeless excepting for three branchless trees, which leaned from each other like empty crosses. It was Sunday morning, and the bodies of the two thieves had been removed, as well as the centre Incarnation ; but the crosses had been left standing. The picture was complete, even to the most trifling detail.

CHAPTER XVII

BORDERLAND

Road to Deniliquin—A Human Mole—A Sunset at Castlemaine—The Bendigo Porter—A Working Larrikin—Echuca—A Lesson in Good Breeding.

It was a rush up towards Deniliquin after leaving Ballarat, with only a short time at Maryborough, a day and night at Sandhurst, the same at Echuca, and one night at Deniliquin, the end of the railway, and the first important township on the New South Wales boundary.

This part of the country is not so interesting from an artist's point of view as some other routes; yet it has its pretty spots left, which the prospector has passed over as unworthy of his shaft-sinking; but they are isolated beauty-spots. On all the principal portions of the land were bored large, cave-like holes, those on the level surface distinguishable by the mounds of *débris* cast upwards, as if by gigantic moles; those penetrating the sides of banks and hills gaping blackly, with the earth and mud rolling down over the grass, and giving then the appearance of landslips.

In one of these holes, they told me, an old man had spent the last twenty years of his life.¹ He had worn out his clothes long ago, and although he had found no gold as yet in that hole, yet he had not worn out hope. For years

¹ I find out from my other notes that this mole works at Ormoc district, not Echuca way.

he had not been seen, for he selected the night to bring out his excavations and look for the food which other diggers brought to the mouth of his cave and left for him there. They are a good-natured, charitable set, these diggers. They knew that he still lived and bored on, for each morning the meat had disappeared, and a fresh layer of earth was poured over the bank, without the slightest colour or trace of gold-signs about it. A strange old hermit, or human mole, who spent his life digging his own grave! Some morning they all knew that they would find the food untouched, and no fresh earth carried out, and then they would take it as a sign that this lucky digger had discovered his nugget.

Past Maryborough—which is a neat little town—the country improves, and becomes more diversified, with creeks, ranges, gulleys, and rivers. The Castlemaine Valley looks very fine and deep toned, with Barker's Creek running along, and a tumultuous picture of a sky overhead, as the sun sets in the middle of saffron, purple, and crimson clouds, like the representation of a demoniac battle-field, done with the brutal frankness of a modern Impressionist who is sincere in his madness, and not an ignorant amateur trying to pose as a master. Nature is a wonderfully vivid Impressionist, particularly in her sky-work sometimes, and lays on her *fleeting* tints with singular decision; only when she does this it is a quick-change effect—something to dazzle the beholder only for a second, and leave an excitement behind. What she wants us to linger over and look long at she is most pre-Raphaelite with in her treatment—*almost* as careful as 'Whistler,' the erratic, can be, *when he likes*, in odd corners.

To-night, as 'we glide through Castlemaine, Nature is like this inimitable etcher at his wildest in the way of flying strokes. All the heavens are a whirl of mad flourishes, with the prismatic colouring of an Oriental rug,

while the earth waits, like an appreciative audience, silent and subdued.

A rare twilight follows this tempest of colour, Nature, after her wild flings and excited gestures, lying back, flushed and breathless, like a tired-out dancer. The clouds gather together in sombre masses, like cushions of silk-covered eider-down, while all about is pulsating. Then the colour dies out of that flushing space, and the pallor of death succeeds, to be followed by that resurrection called Star-land.

Sandhurst, or Bendigo, is, like Ballarat, a splendidly-built city, with massive buildings and well-laid-out gardens, spoilt by those awful mounds of crushed quartz and skeleton poppit-heads. They rear above the trees into the summer sky, and when the wind rises you get, instead of honest earth-dust, that finely-pulverised quartz powder, which, like ground glass, cuts when it enters, right down your throat, and right into the lungs. I understand that there is a company formed to make stone blocks of this quartz powder. All power to it! May it succeed beyond its fullest expectations, and hurry up the work of solidifying that poison-powder, so that people in these gold-supported townships may be able to live and enjoy the invigorating breezes of Australia.

Sandhurst has one great institution—its cabs: the poorest man may drive about here, if he prefers that sort of locomotion to walking. I drove by cab to the Gardens and Lake at Eagle Hawk, three miles from Sandhurst, for the small fee of sixpence—*i.e.*, twopence per mile.

I had an adventure, as I was leaving Sandhurst Station for Echuca, which impressed that particular station upon my memory. My train left at eight o'clock, but finding time heavy on my hands, I went into the station about half an hour before the time of starting. As I had found out that

the train was there waiting empty, I thought I would take my seat, and compose myself for the journey.

I found a porter at the gateway of the platform as I entered, who planted himself in front of me, saying, roughly : ' You can't get in here yet, mate.'

' I am going to Echuca, and have my ticket all right, and I believe that is my train,' I observed, pointing to the waiting train, and trying to get past him as I did so.

But the Sandhurst railway-porter had a high sense of his responsibility, and a forcible way of proving it, for without more words than ' Get back ! ' he brought his heavy fist down on my breastbone with a thud.

This was too much for me, so I returned the compliment, landing him on the flat of his back ; after which I sought out a suitable carriage, and was just depositing my traps, when he came rushing up to me in a terribly excited manner, followed by a couple of his porter friends.

' Haven't you had enough of it ? ' I asked, as he made a wild clutch at me.

' No, you —— ; and I mean to have more before I leave you,' he roared, putting himself into position No. 1.

' All right,' I replied ; ' hold on a minute.'

I hadn't any coat to take off, and it took only a second to fling my felt hat alongside my sketching-bag and turn up my sleeves.

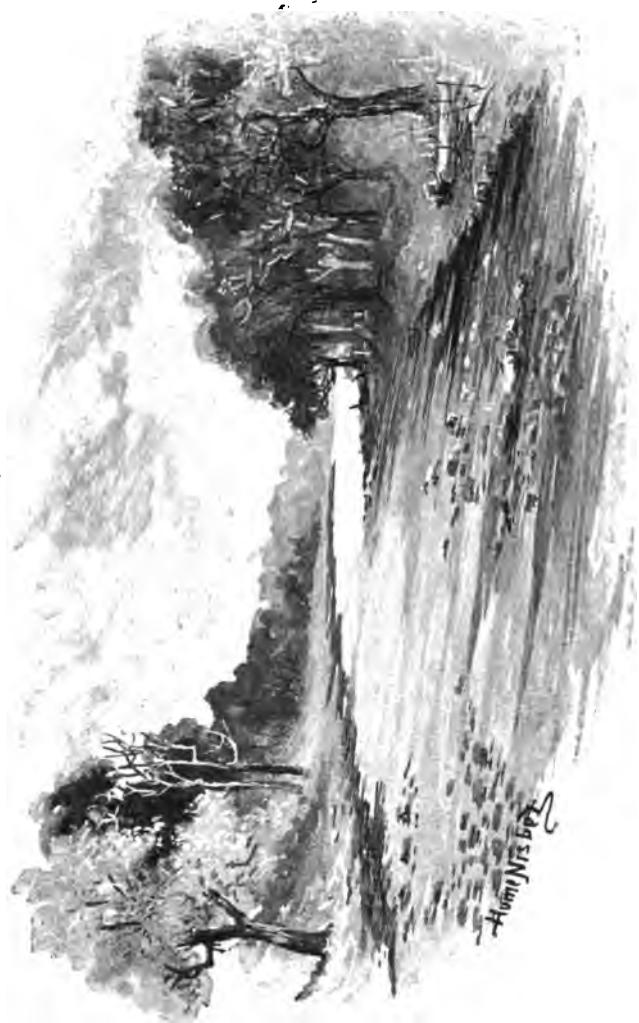
' Now then, old man,' I said when I was ready ; and we both set to for a warm five minutes of the manly exercise. He was a plucky fellow, but he didn't quite understand left-handed practice, so that at the end of the five minutes he threw up the sponge and declared that his outraged dignity was appeased, and himself quite satisfied, after which we shook hands, and as victor I had to stand drinks all round. This ceremony over, he insisted on getting a more com-

fortable carriage for me, and then, time being up, we parted the best of friends.

I was talking to an American friend the other day about porters, hotel-boots, and gentlemen of the like professions. We agreed that there was not much difference between the American and the English waiters, excepting in the matter of 'tips.' There the marked difference showed up most strongly ; for whereas the English waiter will thank you, and touch his forelock respectfully in exchange for a few coppers, the American professional will give you specimens of the 'spread eagle,' intermingled with the stars and stripes, if you attempt to put him off with a few cent pieces. He is a mighty independent citizen of the United States, and a free man and brother, upon anything under a dollar-piece ; then the eagle may condescend to fold his wings and stoop his noble head, but for not one cent less.

The typical porter of Australia is a totally different specimen, particularly in side stations ; in the larger towns, I am sorry to say that they are getting contaminated with the vices of civilisation. The typical porter will always find a real pleasure in carrying along a lady's baggage, nor will he object to lend a hand to a man who is over-heavily burdened. But you must be careful never to offer him a 'tip' for such a service—a drink is all very well, and 'chum-like' ; but let it end there, and, unless you wish to be insulted, don't attempt to order him to carry a parcel for you that you can carry yourself. Remember that he has his feelings.

I had only one fellow-passenger to Echuca in the carriage which I had been escorted to—a very small young man, of the Sim Tappertit order of being, and supernaturally sharp, loquacious, and inquisitive. He was very youthful ; indeed, he had not yet began to cultivate a moustache. But he was very old in experience and the ways of the world, and thoroughly self-possessed ; a perfect representative of



HUMPHREY

ON THE RIVER MURRAY



the colonial 'larrikin'—*i.e.*, the working, not the pickpocket, 'larrikin.'

He had been an appreciative spectator of my engagement with the Sandhurst porter, and introduced himself by remarking that it was a 'pretty mill'; after which he plied me with a most exhaustive number of personal questions as to my business, salary, name, address, destination, hopes, intentions, aspirations, and friends past and present. I used to fancy that the Scotch were very fair at this sort of thing, but they were not in the competition with this youthful Melbournite.

But if he was inquisitive, he was also equally confidential. He was much older than he looked—nearly twenty—and had been on the world and catering for himself since ever he could remember—before that period, most likely, which might account for his stunted growth.

A self-confident and patronising young man, he had tried art and literature, also acting, scene-painting, and the circus business, and pitied my position, for, as he remarked, they were the worst paying games he had ever been at. Indeed, I found out before we had got many miles upon our way that he had been everything that mortal man might aim at as a calling, except coach-painting; but he was now post-haste up to Echuca to add that to his general accomplishments.

'I saw an advertisement for a coach-painter wanted up here, and I thought that I'd give it a fair trial; so I wrote about the job, and got it,' he explained, composedly.

'As an apprentice, I suppose?'

'Apprentice be blowed! d'ye think I'd take an apprentice's job? Not for this child; an able-bodied coach-painter, that's what was wanted.'

'But you say that you haven't tried coach-painting?'

‘Never saw it done in my life ; but it might be useful, you know, mightn’t it ?’

‘Oh yes, very ; but how are you going to do the work expected of you ?’

‘This way. You see, the coachbuilder to whom I have engaged myself is likely to be a practical man, and well up to his business. I am also practical : I made him send me my railway-ticket, with a written promise of four weeks’ constant work, or, at least, regular coach-painters’ wages, and my fare back to Melbourne if I don’t suit him. Now you see ?’

‘Not quite.’

‘What slow duffers you English are, to be sure. Don’t you see that I am on the job. My employer knows he has to pay me four weeks’ wages, also that I don’t understand the business ; of course, he will swear a bit—that’s quite natural in his case. But he won’t lose his money more than he can help ; therefore, to get something out of me, he will put me up to the way it is done ; and as I always keep my optics skinned, before the month is up, and he kicks me out, I shall have learnt the whole trade. Don’t you savay now, Boss ?’

‘Yes, I savay,’ I replied, a little awed by his bravery. ‘You’re not afraid that your employer may ill-use you, or—or—even murder you, are you ? He may be a hot-tempered fellow, you know.’

‘Not a bit ; none of them have hurt me much so far. And that’s how I have learnt all my trades ; a pity though, isn’t it, that this is the last I have left to learn ?’

There was a tone of real regret in this enterprising youth’s voice, as he sighed, and looked for a moment out of the carriage-window. It was like young Alexander sighing for new worlds to conquer. I felt sincerely for him under the circumstances.

‘And what will you do after you are kicked out from Echuca?’

‘Go back to Melbourne, and apply at all the coach-builders there for a job,’ replied this hero, promptly. ‘I don’t say that I may quite *please* the first or second job I get, but on the third or fourth I’ll be all there.’

It was a noble idea, and one which could alone be generated in a fertile brain ripened by a generous, Southern sun. I looked over the weazened little impudent face, and the assertive but puny legs, now crossed in an easy fashion, with a dazed gaze of wonderment, as he produced his empty pipe and asked me for a fill; and then, yielding up my cake of Ruby Twist and my box of lights, I turned sadly to contemplate the passing landscape.

The moon had by this time risen, and was bathing the whole land with a warm glow—one of those moons which are never to be seen in the land of fogs, lustrous, mellow, and thrilling in its intensity. All objects could be seen almost as well as by daylight, only with softened edges and broader masses of light and shadow—a night and a land for Titania and her Court to come to and play. For such a rare delight as these moonlight nights give, one may well be scorched a little by day. We were flying over an enchanted land of filigree-work in pale gold.

Echuca, the half of which is claimed by New South Wales, lies on the River Murray. Like all border places, the party feelings of the two colonies become concentrated here; on this side of the bridge which crosses the Murray the Echucans are rabid Victorians, on the other side they are rabid Welshmen.

There are two big rivers at Echuca—the Goulburn and the Murray. There is also the Campaspe, which joins the Murray here, and forms a peninsula, upon which the town stands. It is flat ground all about here, and liable to winter

floodings; but along the banks grow some very fine, heavy timber—the red gum, which is useful for building purposes, being easily cut and beautiful in colour. Barges and river-steamers ply constantly up and down the River Murray, carrying wood and other merchandise; there are also large sawmills on the banks, and a fine vineyard of over sixty acres of vine cultivation here.

I measured one of the red-gum trunks here on the banks of the Campaspe River, about four feet from where the roots began to spread out, and found it to be thirty-three feet in circumference.

After leaving Echuca, I crossed the border, and was in New South Wales. Hitherto, all along the Western District and up this line, although I had mixed with many wealthy and fashionably-dressed Victorians, I did not find that my outlandish, digger-like costume made any difference so far as courtesy was concerned. It was at Deniliquin that I received a lesson on the importance of dress which almost made me feel ashamed of my temerity in daring to consult my own taste in such matters.

I went to one of the hotels. It chanced that I had taken one of the fashionable places of resort for the gay young squatter bucks of the Riverina District; for Deniliquin is quite a fast and fashionable township in its own little way. At the bar I saw a pretty barmaid, of whom I inquired if I could have a bedroom for the night.

She glanced at me in that coldly aristocratic way which the true English-manufactured, railway-station bar-ladies sometimes adopt when forced to attend to the plebeian wants of the British workman, and leave for a moment the simpering masher who may have been engrossing their attention, while he dallies over his *curacao*, and said that she couldn't tell me, but I had better ask the waiter.

I forgave this maiden, because she was pretty, and there-

fore had a right to be disdainful if she liked ; besides, she was at the moment engaged in smiling sweetly upon half a dozen of gaily-attired 'Jackeries' ; so, leaving the bar, I stumbled along the passage until I fell upon a waiter.

'Can I have a bedroom here, waiter, for the night?'

The waiter looked me over critically, and finally remarked :—

'I don't know if *you* can ; I'll ask the master.'

'Yes, do, and look sharp, for I want to get settled.'

He went off, and brought the landlord, who also took a survey of me, and then said, a little reluctantly : 'Yes, I daresay you can ; John, take him up to No. 40.'

I was evidently regarded as a suspicious customer in this respectable hotel. No. 40 was situated at the top of the house, so that I might not get too easily away, if I was up to any game ; while my guide wanted to see what I had brought in the way of luggage.

'Any luggage?'

'No, John ; none but what you see here.'

'Then it is the rule to be paid in advance when no luggage is brought.'

'That'll do, John ; get my bill made out for dinner, bed, and breakfast, and I'll be down presently and pay it' ; saying which, I shoved him outside, and shut the door in his face. I wouldn't have done this to a Victorian waiter ; but then, none of them had treated me like this one—it nearly felt as if I had come back to dear old England.

I had a wash and brush down, and then descended to dinner. They were all there—Jackeries young and old, squatters, and fashionably-dressed ladies—therefore, as all eyes were turned towards me as I entered, I felt for an instant abashed ; but I soon recovered myself, and sat down in the chair set for me.

No one spoke to me at dinner, so that all I had to do

was to eat, drink, and amuse myself by listening to the innocent prattle of the others; then, after dinner, I sought the smoke-room to enjoy my pipe.

It was here that the kindly but severe lesson was given to me. The gentlemen were all speaking to each other, when the subject of Chinese opium-dens in Sydney started up, and one of the gentlemen made a remark about the exceedingly filthy state in which they kept their houses, making the statement with the authority of one who knew the subject from personal experience.

I was much interested, and wanted to know more, for my experiences of the Chinese of Little Bourke Street had been exactly the reverse; so, on the impulse of the moment, I asked him a question about it, expecting, of course, to be answered.

But, to my astonishment, this gentleman turned round, and looked me slowly all over, from head to foot—that kind of lingering gaze which is so comforting to the recipient thereof; after which he turned back again to his companions with a remark about ‘infernally impudent,’ at which they laughed, as if it had been a merry jest which he had made.

I am a very bashful fellow, as a rule, and easily upset in an argument; but this was the sort of reply which was best calculated to take the shyness right out of me. Had he been a very young man, I would have overlooked it entirely; but he was middle-aged, so I could not. Therefore, quietly rising from my chair, I walked up to the group, and observed: ‘I beg your pardon, gentlemen, but is this—person very deaf?’ And then I waited, with a bland smile, for the reply.

None came for a little space, and then one young fellow, to whom I was looking, muttered:

‘Not that I am aware of.’

‘Because I asked him a question upon the subject he was speaking of, and in which I am deeply interested.’

‘I am not bound to answer every question that a cad of a stranger may ask me, am I?’ blurted out the party himself, his face scarlet with passion.

‘Certainly not,’ I replied. ‘This is a public room, and the “cad of a stranger” apologises to you all for his “infernal impudence”; with which humility I went to bed sadly.’

Two days afterwards I had cause to be very sorry for that same gentleman, for the New South Wales squatter whom I was visiting, and to whom I had related my first public reception in New South Wales, grew very indignant over it, and swore roundly that it must have been a stranger to Deniliquin who could act so rudely to any one.

‘I must drive you down, and introduce you to some of the natives, who will soon take that bad impression out of your mind.’

So we drove down, and as we were walking along the street we almost ran against the gentleman of the smoke-room, whom my friend greeted warmly.

‘Let me introduce you, Mr. Smith, to my friend, Hume Nisbet, who has been atrociously treated by some fellow——’

He stopped short in his speech, for the party he was introducing dropped the hand he had spread out for me to take, and stood looking upon me with almost comical consternation.

‘The devil!’ he gasped out at last.

‘Yes, that is the fellow,’ I replied, with a laugh, but keeping my hand still in my pocket.

‘What fellow?’ cried my friend.

‘The one who proved to me how necessary it is for a man to be dressed in society.’

‘Oh, hang it!’ said the poor man, as he mopped his head—‘don’t; how the mischief could I tell who you were in such an outrageous get-up?’

‘Just so,’ I replied. ‘Now let us go and have a drink, and tell me about the Sydney opium-dens.’

CHAPTER XVIII

SHEEP-OWNERS AND THEIR ENEMIES

The Riverina—Dry Weather at Deniliquin—Temples to Tethys—
 ‘Jackeries’ and ‘Cockatoos’—Old Baldy—An Old-fashioned Hotel
 at Castlemaine.

It was a source of great comfort to my friend, the Riverina squatter, when he found that the rudeness of my reception could not be laid on the shoulders of New South Wales; for the gentleman who had done it had only lately come out from England, bringing with him his insular prejudices. But he was not satisfied with this; he went on further with his investigations, regardless that I treated the whole thing as a joke now that it was over. His patriotic pride was up, and he would not let the matter rest until he had convinced me that all in the smoke-room at the time of the affront had been ‘Jackeries’—*i.e.*, young gentlemen sent from the mother-country to learn the business of squatting; the waiter was an insignificant Cockney; even the pretty barmaid had only lately been imported—so that, as he triumphantly explained, New South Wales was entirely exonerated; she had not been in it at all.

And certainly, with the exception of this little incident, I never had any cause to complain of the hospitality of this Colony. I will admit that they are hardly quite so free and lavish in their first reception of strangers, and are more sedate and quiet, and without the youthful impetuosity

which suits my own youthful heart, and which distinguishes the Victorians; but then they are older, which may be the reason why they like to know a little about you before they take you to their bosoms.

I had great reason to mistrust the positive statements of Mr. Smith regarding the sanitary state of the Sydney opium-dens, not only from what I had seen in Melbourne and other parts, but from the general remarks which he made about the Colonies, and which proved that, if he had gone over them, it had been with a proper pair of John Bull's specially-manufactured British smoke-tinted spectacles over his eyes, which brought everything down to the tone in which he had *prepared* himself to see them; so that I did not feel as if I had improved time much the hour we spent together—after all, I would have to go and judge for myself.

Deniliquin is decidedly a squatters', therefore a very swell, town, although not large. As they are all masters in the art of riding and racing, they have a very flourishing Jockey Club. The library is not a very prominent institution with them, there being in the Mechanics' Institute (which I don't think is free) only 725 volumes, which, compared with most Victorian towns of the same size—Maryborough, for instance, where there are 1,250 volumes in the Free Library—is rather a poor show in the matter of mental pabulum. However, the inhabitants of this border town, if not greatly addicted to the taking down of books from shelves, come out very strongly in the way of hotels, there being twenty-seven within the municipal area. Not a bad supply for a population of 2,500.

The Edward River runs through the town, and a very pretty view of the Public Hall, with rustic bridge and well laid out gardens, can be had from the roadside; also picturesque reaches of the river, with water-plants floating and

reeds waving over its surface. This river is subject to great droughts, and as it was about the height of the dry season, when fires were more rife than green grass, I saw it in its very worst aspect.

These droughts have been the one great affliction of the Riverina district, although they are now partly remedied by dams, which have been made at considerable expense, but as yet are only partially successful. Had the Australians the power at command (cheap labour) of the ancient Pharaohs and Indian kings, they would build vast temples to Vesta, also to Tethys and her daughters, the Naiads, and so solve the difficulty. Great temples of stone above, where the flocks could come for cooling shelter and sacrifice their wool on the sheep-shearing altars, while deep ice-cold lakes would be made below, which the sun's rays could not penetrate to lick up. Egypt and some parts of India are hot, thirsty lands, and so was the site of Babylon; yet all these ancients could afford to have cooling fountains playing in the sunny air everywhere and all day long. But then labour was cheap in ancient times, and humanity not of so much consideration as it is now in the Colonies. Still, I hope that when next I visit the Colonies I may see a few of those temple-reservoirs studding the dry land, with green gardens about them, while they raise their massive walls and picturesque domes grandly above the tree-tops.

The whole land, at the time I visited it, looked like a lately-ploughed field, dingy, grey, and grassless, with sheep starving and dying of thirst by the wayside in dozens. Mothers were bringing forth their young with grief and woe—a regular Golgotha, or place of skulls and skeletons.

The flocks were no longer grazing, but trying to exist, as pigs do, by grubbing for roots, gasping at us, as we passed, with parched mouths from which no bleat could break. They were waiting with lank, starved bodies, as their

owners were waiting, impotently, upon the coming of the long-delayed rain.

When it came, then all this scene of desolation would be changed as if by magic—what was black now would be luscious meadow-land of the richest green, and covered with the most ravishing flowers ; then the flocks which had out-lived this weary time of probation would revel in Arcadia, with gushing streams everywhere, and the land be transformed from a gloomy epic of despair to a glowing pæan of rejoicing. It is almost worth going through Purgatory to get safely into Heaven. The toothache is a bad complaint, while it is with us ; but there is no balm like the peace which comes after it has gone.

There were two names which I heard here almost for the first time—the ‘ Jackerie ’ and the ‘ Cockatoo,’ as applied to white people.

The ‘ Jackerie,’ as I have explained, is the young gentleman who pays for being an apprentice to a squatter. His privileges are : he lodges in the house with the family of the squatter, is expected to dress like a gentleman each night he is home to dinner, and generally make himself agreeable to his host and hostess.

His duties are much too numerous to mention : if there is any disagreeable work, the station-hands invariably leave it for him to do, for they generally abhor him as an up-start ; he is in the saddle all day long, from break of day till sundown, and he gets plenty of opportunities to learn his trade in all its branches.

Yet they are great mashers from sundown to bedtime, and at some of these stations are as punctilious as to etiquette as on board a man-of-war. I was nearly overcome, the first night I spent at one of these stations, to find myself ushered into the drawing-room amongst ladies and gentlemen in full evening dress. For a moment I felt dazed as I burst upon

the dazzling company in my grey flannel shirt, with collar attached, and trousers only—I was like Pickwick when he mistook his bedroom, or rather a sleep-walker who had suddenly awakened to find himself confronted by a startled covey of boarding-school young ladies. Then the incongruity of it all struck me as being so awfully funny that I burst out laughing, and carried it off with a joke, at which the company laughed, although I don't think the young ladies quite forgave their father for inviting such a barbarian into the bush.

The 'Cockatoo' is the natural enemy and horror of the squatter. In olden times he would have been driven out and his cultivated fields trampled down by wild bullocks, but now the law protects him, and the squatter has to grin and bear it as best he can.

The 'Cockatoo' is a selector who has bought a piece of land uncomfortably near to the station land, which the modern squatter can now only hire provisionally. Many of these cockatoos come simply to annoy their wealthy neighbours and levy blackmail in the form of being bought out. With these men the cultivation of land is a mere farce; they raise up a rough shanty, loaf about all day, and steal their neighbours' sheep at night. Their allotment is a constant offence to the eyes of the land-renter, until at last he is forced to give them their own price and buy them out of their land on some pretence or other, so as to evade the law; i.e., one of the squatter's friends or trusted hands who may not yet be a landowner gets the money from the squatter and buys the nuisance out, from that particular spot at any rate. A real *bonâ fide* 'cockatoo' of this caste goes about from station to station and makes a good income with this blackmail business.

Squatters, as a rule, do not encourage selectors near their land. If the man is honest in his intentions, and

means to raise a homestead, he is rarely successful, as he can so easily be boycotted. He generally ends in selling out and seeking the forest allotments. In the olden times the selector hadn't the ghost of a chance, for the only magistrate to whom he could complain was either the squatter who had injured him or some other of his class and intimates. The stock-drivers could always manage to let a rail slip when driving their wild cattle at such times as his fields were nearly ready for reaping. In a few minutes the cattle would trample and destroy the work of months. He could appeal, of course, to a higher court than the local magistrate, but that meant expense and time, which he could not afford; so that it mostly ended in his selling out to the tyrant and removing his household goods elsewhere.

The modern 'Cockatoo' represents the Nemesis of the honest selector, and the honourable squatter has to suffer for the unjust tyranny of predecessors in the good old Norman times of the colony, when might represented right amongst the great shepherd kings.

I regard these avengers—the sham selectors or 'Cockatoos'—with just abhorrence, and think no actions too strong which would wipe them off the face of the land, and all their clan with them. I can enter also into the injuries of the squatter when he looks over what he regarded as his rights and sees them taken from him by Act of Parliament. It is disagreeable, to say the least of it; yet the cure lies in their own hands. Let them make their sons and sons-in-law farmers, and let them till and cultivate the land; for that is what the loamy parts of the country must eventually come to (the desert is the place for sheep-farming on a great scale). Let them send for all their relations and make them part owners, so that they will not be annoyed by the sight of an avaricious and loafing 'cockatoo' settling down within

sight of their own homestead and preying upon them ; for it is but right, after all, that all good land should be tilled, wherever it is found.

It is an interesting and free life, this station work : the young men get up at daybreak, swallow their breakfast, saddle and mount their horses, and fly away like Bedouins of the desert—an exhilarating and healthy, if not a very intellectual existence, for I defy any one to spare much time for thinking when a large station has to be gone over and looked after.

I join the ‘Jackeries’ in their early ride, and, as I have not had a horse under me for many a year, and then only on an off-chance, they select the oldest horse in the stables for my use. He is perfectly safe.

Old Baldy, who never had a vice even in his most skittish days, may suit now the most decorous bishop. He has not been seen for years go at a faster pace than a walk—an animal precise and sedate as an old soldier, with a back square, or, rather, full of angles, and ribs which press somewhat unpleasantly against the calves of legs when they bestride him ; his profile is Roman and high bred, with a general air of lofty forbearance which is a trifle awesome to such a novice as I am.

Baldy is not often taken out of the stable, unless it is to recline upon the grass of the paddock ; so he exhibits a little surprise as he is led forth to-day. He regards me with languid indifference as I go forward to mount, but when I attempt to mount on the wrong side he wakes up all of a sudden, and flings back at me a side glance which is a fine blending of scorn and fear.

‘Never saw old Baldy so startled-like before,’ murmured one of the ‘Jackeries,’ as we trotted out of the yard. ‘Looks as if he were recalling the days of his youth.’

Baldy, poor fellow, doesn’t know the difference between

a genius and a jackass, but he feels that he has something mortal strange upon his back, for his eyes are rolling fearfully as he paws the ground like an ancient Juan trying to waltz. He has received a galvanic shock to his weary nerves, and the rheumatic joints are beginning to relax.

Then the others begin to gallop, and, wonder of wonders, Baldy attempts to beat them; fear banishes caution, and he sets off with a wild snort and a throwing up of his fine old Roman nose.

We rode that day about ten miles, and were about three hours on the journey to distant wool-sheds and outlying shepherds' huts, while all about us lay gloomy mirages of lakes and gum trees; but it might have been a hundred miles from the after-effects.

These mirages come with the long drought, and spread all about one. Say, fifty yards distant you see a lake gleaming white, you ride up to it, and it disappears in a little flash of smoke amongst the grass roots, to be repeated further on; yet it is wonderfully realistic while it lasts.

An old horse is a very fine and safe horse for a timid rider *who is made of cast iron*. I was not, and when we returned, and my hostess asked me to sit, I was forced to reply that I preferred standing.

The same objection to using a chair, except in the form of a *prie-dieu*, clung to me all the way back to Melbourne. At Castlemaine, where I halted for a couple of nights, the people wanted to know if I had taken a vow against sitting. I replied that I had. 'Why?'—the reason was a sacred one.

I travelled down to Castlemaine with a young fellow who was a cattle-driver, and who came from the Hebrides. What a splendid fellow that was, and what a tale he told me of the life of a drover through the interior! I reserve it for



LAKE DISTRICT, GIPPSLAND

H. J. H. H. H.



the present, as it takes in all the troubles and experiences of the explorer overland.

Castlemaine is where Burke, the explorer, was born and brought up. There is a pillar put up there in memory of his ill-fated expedition, and in honour of him, by his town-people. There are, of course, other things to be seen at Castlemaine, but this is what brought me chiefly there—this and the desire to rest my aching bones.

It was late when I got in, and so I took the first place I saw. It was not a very tempting hotel. They likewise had their own ways there ; but still, after I had fairly won their confidence they treated me more than kindly.

I found that in this hotel they were old-fashioned, and would not tolerate the servility of modern ways. It was one of the few relics of the past that I had seen up to this time.

For instance, when I went to bed I left my boots outside my door to be cleaned according to hotel habits. In the morning I heard the maidservant knock at the different doors, crying, 'Ye've got to get up, if you want any breakfast, for it's jist about ready.'

Grunts and oaths followed the maiden in her passage. When she got to my door I heard her kick something out of her way and pass on to the next.

I jumped out of bed, as I heard the others doing, and scrambled into my clothes, and opened the door.

It was my dirty boots which the maiden had kicked out of her way. Then I remembered that in the early times, when fastidious guests wanted to polish their boots, they had to do it themselves, so I wended my way to the kitchen to ask for the materials.

'Was them your boots that I found at the door this morning?' asked the maid, as she pointed to where the brushes were.

I admitted the delinquency meekly.

‘Then don’t you try that on again in this house,’ answered the irate maiden, darkly, as she turned her back upon me in her virtuous indignation. ‘This here is a free house for women, not a place for slaves.’

I waited after that until I reached Melbourne before I tried to get any one to blacken my boots, happy to have got off so easy. In the good old times I might have been kicked out of the hotel.

CHAPTER XIX

THE LAKE DISTRICT OF GIPPSLAND

The Life of a Cattle Driver—Warragul—A Lenient Judge—Sale—
The Lakes—A Native Poet.

WHEN an explorer makes up his mind to go through the heart of Africa or Australia, the nation prepares to see him and his companions, camels, horses, and baggage, set out with a perfect wave of excitement; or waits during the long silence which follows his departure with gloomy foreboding; and if he returns all right, or even not all right, what a universal hero he has become.

How few of us give a thought to the fact that almost constantly slave-drivers are driving their captives over the same unknown route in Africa, enduring the same dangers and hardships as the world-famed explorers are enduring, and all merely for a very modest wage from the master who orders them to go.

In Australia, by far a more trying country to get through than Africa, the cattle-driver is a hero as great as the biggest explorer could possibly be, only like many a true poet he thinks nothing of himself, neither does the world know or care anything at all about him.

Half a dozen of these plucky fellows will get the order to take, say fifty or a hundred thousand head of cattle, with perhaps double that number of sheep, from the fat lands of Camperdown to some northern Queensland station which

the squatter may have taken for some younger member of his family, and without giving a thought that they are doing exactly what Burke and Wills tried to do, they mount their horses and ride out of Camperdown station with merely a wave of the hand on that long and perilous journey.

It may take them two and a half or three years to cover that thousand and a half of miles, for sheep walk slowly, cattle are apt to stampede, and have to be hunted after, feeding-ground has to be sought for this great following, and long rests taken to recruit strength, and they are responsible for the flocks and herds under their charge.

Two and a half years of dangers and privations such as Burke and Wills describe in their unfinished diary; long distances to get over without food or water, yet over which they cannot hurry, but must ride at a slow walk; raids from hostile blacks, who are always fond of a bit of surreptitious mutton; floods overtaking them and their charges; so they go on from month to month, creeping up northward through unknown lands, over deserts worse than Sahara, lost to their fellows, yet never for a moment dreaming that they are doing any greater work than looking after their sheep and cattle; these are the unacknowledged explorers who have made Australia what it is, and will be, the greatest country in the world.

I did not go to New Zealand, but decided to take Gippsland instead, before going by sea to Sydney. I knew from past years what New Zealand would be like during the months of May, June, and July: roads impassable, and an everlasting downpour. Had I gone, it was decided that I should go at the same time as my young shipmate, Bainbridge, who had just gone back. According to my calculations, I should have gone to the Pink Terraces and hot springs at the time of the eruption and their total destruction.

All the world knows how poor Bainbridge came by his death, and how heroically he bore his fate, writing his farewell message with the ground heaving under him, and that fearsome eruptive storm raging round. Many blamed him for staying in the hotel, and said that he had time to make his escape if he had liked to fly as others had done ; but we who knew him on board of the ' Parramatta ' during that six weeks, all felt that there was some dark fate upon him even then. He seldom spoke, but sat with us all through the voyage, but not of us ; he was unconsciously preparing himself for that awful Pink Terrace tragedy in New Zealand.

I made up my mind to stay for a night, to break my train journey to Sale, at Warragul in the county of Buln-Buln, partly because it was half-way, partly because it was not mentioned in my guide-book, and so I fancied I might get something fresh to write about.

We had passed, on this route, Toorak, the fashionable suburb, Armadale, and Malvern, where they cultivate the vine and grow tobacco. The wines of Australia are very fine when kept the proper time, and are, I should say, the least adulterated in the world. The tobacco is as yet entirely a question of time. As an experienced smoker, I view the colonial leaf with respectful reserve. I tried a fill of it *once*, in North Queensland : a cake had been presented to me as a sample ; it looked very fine, and I believe delighted the Papuan to whom I in my turn presented what remained after that fill, which I shall never forget, short as my memory may be as regards injuries.

Passed Caulfield, celebrated for its racecourse, the Goodwood of Victoria. I was in Melbourne again at the time of their great cup race. What a time that is in Victoria ! men, women, boys, girls, infants, all classes crazy over horse-betting. I left a sovereign with a friend to speculate for me,

for I had not the courage to be the odd man in a colony of gamblers, but I spent the exciting week at Lilydale and Fernshaw, amongst the mighty forest trees, so lost the opportunity to describe that wonderful sight.

But I did not miss the eight hours' demonstration in Melbourne. What a sight that was, the mighty army of triumphant workers marching along the streets with their banners and trade insignia, something to thrill and fill a man with pride for humanity! These were the men who so nobly helped our London Dockers to win their great victory in 1889—another gathering which made the tears rush over my cheeks with pride and glory, as I followed in the wake of the workers who will be masters yet in rights as they are in reality, and as they have come to be in Australia, the home of the free.

Hark, fresh reapers' feet are clanking, never falter or repine.

I was glad that I rested at Warragul, for I got a fine effect of morning mist, with tapering, tall trees upstarting on each side of the bush track, and one or two other sketches of the township lying in the valley. It will be a big place by and by when they get it cleared; as yet it is detached and scattered, still a very good sample of a bush township in its infancy.

It was while here that a Castlemaine paper fell into my hands, in which an account of a criminal case struck me very much. A hard-working, and hitherto honest digger, who was out of a job and on the tramp, had gone up to a house to see if they would sell him a loaf of bread. When he reached the house, he found the door open, but could not make himself heard; the people were all out. On the kitchen-table he saw a loaf of bread, and, feeling very hungry, he went in and took it, leaving the price of it where the loaf had been. He did not think it a crime, and when charged admitted the act quite frankly, and many people came

forward at the trial to testify to his former honesty. The judge admitted that the prisoner's statements were found to be all correct, and to show his leniency under the circumstances sentenced him to twenty-one days' solitary confinement and one month's hard labour; the prisoner had previous to this lain in prison for six weeks waiting his trial. The case altogether struck me as a peculiar one from point of law. The *leniency* of this judge was so remarkable, that I could not help wishing that he some day might occupy the place of the prisoner under similar circumstances, if only for the sake of hearing his opinions upon the law then, and what he thought about this kind of mercy. I think he was a young man, this remarkably lenient judge, too youthful I would say for his position, and I trust that the people taught him something before they let him go on his pleasure circuit; that is, if they did let him go on it. I have often wondered since if he is still laying down the law, or if he has been disbenched, and allowed to take to a more suitable calling.

I wish I could have returned to Castlemaine to have learnt the *finale* of this comedy, also to have visited Mount Alexander, the Harcourt granite quarries, and the stalactites in the mines there. I was fortunate enough to learn all about the diamond-drill, the instrument by which they now prospect likely gold mines. As the diamond bores down, it sends samples of the ground up exactly as it goes through it. Sometimes, however, it may come upon a cavity; and this is the greatest danger, for then the drill drops suddenly down and gets lost—a very serious matter to the company, as these diamond-drills are costly affairs. The Government lends them out to companies, who take the risk of losses and damage.

It was at Castlemaine also that I saw a repository work, where they smelted the gold leavings and made it pay;

that is, they got all the crushed quartz dust, calcined it, and afterwards washed it for the sake of the stray grains of the precious ore which might be passed over. The calcined powder was of a dark chocolate colour, and I fancy was utilised as a pigment, or could be, for priming work.

I made a couple of sketches at Yarragon of the great forest trees, and resolved to stay there on my return.

Sale is the principal town of Gippsland, and looks a most flourishing and comfortable town, while the country round is in a high state of cultivation, hops and arrowroot being the principal products. The public gardens are well worth a visit, while from Lake Guthridge a pretty view of Sale can be seen.

It was on a Victorian Bank Holiday I made the trip through the Lakes, therefore I had plenty of company; yet although coaches, hotels, trams, and steamers were crowded, no one bothered me in my sketching, while all were genial and kindly to each other, without the uncomfortable boisterousness of a Bank Holiday in England—no pushing about or asserting the rights of places. They saw that I was on duty, and freely made way for me, giving up their own seats and otherwise obliging me, by keeping out of the range of my vision as I was sketching.

We drove for three miles from Sale to reach the landing-place for lake steamers on the Latrobe River, or rather near where three rivers join, viz., the Thomson, Glengarry, and Latrobe. Gippsland never runs short of water, and is the most English, or rather Scotch like part of the colonies, always green, fresh, and lively, just what some of our own lake districts might be, with such a southern sun and limpid atmosphere over them.

I hear the cry of the bell-bird here; hardly so musical as I anticipated it would be, rather like the creaking of an un-oiled axle, still near enough to give it a name. These

rivers are full, and covered with wildfowl; in the nooks swim vast flocks of the black swan, teal, and wild ducks, while along the banks grow lines of the yellow wattle amongst the rich grasses and waving reeds.

So we sail on for ten miles of the river-way, twisting about, and at every turn finding out something delightful and surprising. One hour or more of this, and then we steam into the first of the lakes, Wellington, twelve miles long by ten broad. I never thought that I could see such a fresh-water lake in Australia; it was like Loch Lomond, while afar off rose the distant Alps floating in blue haze.

Amongst the company were Mr. Wallen, of the *Australasian*, and his brother the banker at Sale. He had been watching me for some time as I filled up page after page of my note-book, now sketching with my left hand, now shifting the pencil to my right to write the names and general description, and, as is my custom when interested with my subject, oblivious to all about me. He introduced himself, and afterwards, when he got back, described my achievements in very flattering terms, as the artist who used both hands at the same time.

There was also a young man who stuck to me faithfully all through the daylight and also most of the evening. He said that he was the Victorian poet, and had with him two admiring followers, who sang not only his praises loudly, but also his songs, set to airs of his own composing, for I discovered that this ambitious soul was not satisfied with the poetic gift, but he was also great as a composer of music, and had done some work as an artist. He had come to the lakes for the purpose of seeing if they were up to the 'Vagabond's' description, and felt disappointed and inclined to call that modest gentleman 'a — liar and base time-server.' 'Why, he'd truckle to anything that he thinks

above him and fine,' he remarked, with a burst of gloomy Byronic scorn.

'Perhaps that's why he *truckled* to Lake Wellington and Gippsland generally,' I remarked quietly, as I listened and went on with my work.

'D'ye think this is good scenery?' he asked, with a wild glare at me.

'Very!'

'And I daresay you've seen a goodish bit of the world in your time, and lots of lakes?'

'Yes, a considerable number.'

'Well, I ain't been much out of Melbourne, in fact this is my first visit to the lakes or bush, but if I couldn't imagine a better lake and finer scenery than this is, I'd eat my hat. Why, there's no sort of inspiration about it; I can't get hold of any rhyme to fit to it; it's all a blank to me.'

'Ah, wait till you get home and have a rest from it, and then perhaps it may come upon you all right.'

'Perhaps, if there's anything in it at all *it must*; only I am disappointed with Nature,' he grumbled, turning away in a dissatisfied manner.

The youth was frank in his sincerity and egotism. This Nature was not like what he expected it to be, and the profound breadth of it looked tame and common-place; he expected that it would be crammed like an artificial grotto, and could not yet appreciate the grandeur of isolation. And yet he had in his own immature way the right grip of what Nature's work ought to be, and what the Australian-born poet must tackle if he would make colonial poetry—viz., objects and feelings purely colonial. This young fellow had chosen the 'Gum Tree' as one of his subjects, another was the 'Kangaroo.' Of course his 'Gum Tree' was a parody on the 'Old Oak Tree,' and world-worn subjects of that

description, and the laws of versification were utterly ignored. Still it was a move in the right direction, and by-and-by, if Apollo wills it, he will get at the spirit of the gum-tree and the grand secrets of Nature; then all will go right.

What would I not give to be Australian born, to be of the land which has not yet had a great poet born to it. I come from the land of Scott, Burns, Hogg, and a hundred thousand others, but to be the first poet of his native land ought to be reward enough for any man; and yet my whole soul thrills with desire for the land of the gum tree—there is so much to achieve there, both in prose and verse; as Walt Whitman is the representative poet of America, so I expect the future great Australian to rise, unique, personal—egotistic.

‘Isn’t that fine, now?’ I cried, pointing with my pencil to where the sun was setting all aflame of gold and purple over the ranges, and repeating the glory upon the glassy surface of the lake.

‘Yes, pretty fair,’ observed the callow poet. ‘But I have seen better over old Melbourne.’

And the boy was right, for Melbourne was his kingdom, and when he came to his throne he would write only about that kingdom, as Turner repeated the sunsets of London in his finest creations; and where can the poet ever see more radiant visions and aerial shapes than those which soar upwards from the caverns of a thousand chimney-cans when the sun is going down, and transforming all that defilement and smut into floating forms of beauty?

We are steaming along, and the sun is going down rapidly, when all at once we leave the wide street of glistening water, with its low banks and far distant background of hills, and are drawn into McLellan’s Straits, startling whole clouds of wild birds, while the families of black swans scurry away to leave us a free passage.

What an exquisite passage this is, with foliage closing in upon us as we glide along its six miles of tortuous windings, then into the second of the lakes, Victoria (what an example of loyalty the Australians who fixed upon names were, to be sure!) Lake Victoria is not quite so large as Lake Wellington—I would say about seven-and-a-half miles long—but it is very beautiful, even in the fading light. I see it better as we return, and find it thickly wooded all round, with exquisite reaches, bays, islands, promontories, and headlands, some of the bays completely black with game.

Then with Bluffs Head we glide into another strait, known as McMillan's.

I wish my countrymen had not been so egotistic and prosaic; it might have been known as the 'Run of the Black Swan' in the native tongue; still, we forgive the name for the sombre gloom of the shadows about us, and after passing this we come to the queen of them all; for I suppose a lake is feminine, as all refreshing, cool, delicious things ought to be. I mean Lake King; Lake Helen King it ought to be by right.

The last gleam of daylight is on it as we enter, and as we return, the golden eye of morning; Fainting Range swimming in ether, Eagle Point Bay with its waiting yachts, landing-places where fishermen unload their boats, ravishing promontories wooded to the water's edge. Then into the Mitchell River, with its cultivated banks of hops, tobacco and maize, and bewildering twistings of wooded banks, and then under the bright starlight, with a half-moon hanging overhead, we land at Bairnsdale.

CHAPTER XX

GIPPSLAND

Bairnsdale—The Lakes Entrance—Jamie the Aboriginal—A Night at Yarragon—A Mud Bath, and After.

THEY were very full at both of the hotels that night at Bairnsdale, so that we had to be content with what we could get. I slept on the parlour table, with a rug over me, with four other early risers spread about the floor. All the beds were given up to the ladies, who occupied them in layers of two or three, and, in some cases, four deep. Yet they were an accommodating and good-tempered party, who had come to enjoy themselves, and did not let such incidental trifles interfere with their design.

Next day we set off for the Lakes Entrance, a place where a great deal of money has been already, and is likely to be yet, spent, before they can make it safe for vessels to enter. Here the breakers are always rough, and with only sand for a foundation, so that no breakwater can stand long before their strength. The present pier is a picturesque mass of wreckage, over which the waves rush or break, pitching high into the sunny air the dazzling white clouds of spray. Here we see the Ninety-mile Beach, with Red Bluff Head in the distance—the scene of many a wreck.

Lake King, as we return, looks not only a beautiful, but an animated and flourishing, place. After we leave those broken-down harbour works, and sail out of the Reeves

Straits, there are houses, landing-places, and pleasure-boats scattered all about, past Jamie's Point; like a bit of the Trossachs, with here and there the hop houses standing up like quaint Dutch steeples; Rosherville, with its little pier, and deep reflection of wooded banks; the Tambo River, stealing out of the lake; fishing boats and yachts in shoals, aquatic birds skimming along, and leaving deep furrows in the smooth waves; low banks, followed by high and thickly-wooded bluffs, greet us in rapid succession. We have seen enough for one visit, but yet we have not explored the half of the most lovely of the lakes and rivers of this wonderful land of flood, mountain, and forest. The Back Lakes are the most beautiful and least known of all, and are perfect Paradises for the diligent, beauty-seeking artist or the blood-lustful sportsman.

I suppose some day these lakes, so crammed with bird-life, will be cleared out; but that need not be dreaded for some years yet. At present the birds are almost as tame as the animals were supposed to be before the temptation of Eve, and so abundant and prolific that a gun is hardly required to capture them.

At Lake Tyers, outside the Entrance, the Aboriginal Mission Station is situated. Here the last of the Victorian black fellows wait for the hour of extermination; yet they lead a free and careless life, as they have always done, and regard the present owners of the land with cheerful and philosophic scorn. 'White fellow make road for Black fellow to walk upon. White fellow work hard to keep Black fellow; but White fellow make prisons to shut up White fellow: White fellow dam big fool.' This is the aboriginal verdict upon his robber host, the European.

I was taking a stroll out from Bairnsdale in the twilight, when I met one of these sable gentlemen, who passed me with a pleasant laugh and a hearty Good-night; then,

as if a sudden thought had struck him, he shouted back :

‘ I say, you mate ! have you seen my gin Mary going along this road ? ’

‘ No, Jamie.’

‘ No ? ’—very anxiously, as if the question had been very important, and not raised merely as a blind, and introduction to his real purpose. ‘ Strange ! Sure you didn’t see my gin ? ’

‘ Quite sure of that.’

‘ She was a dressed-up gin, you know. Sure you didn’t see her, mate ? ’

‘ Perfectly sure.’

Then the real purpose of the interview came out.

‘ I say, mate, could you give me a half-crown ? ’

‘ No, Jamie.’

‘ No ? Perhaps you have a shilling about you ? ’

‘ Not even a shilling, Jamie.’

‘ Strange ! but perhaps you have a sixpence ? ’

I shook my head in a negative way, for strangers are not permitted to give money or drink to these unfortunates.

‘ A penny ? ’

‘ Not even a copper.’

‘ Poor devil ! ’—this in a very sad tone, as if he sympathised deeply in my dire poverty ; then, brightening up :

‘ But I know what you must have.’

‘ What is that ? ’

‘ A chew of tobacco ; give me that.’

I delivered over the quid, and we parted, the best of friends. He had never expected money, but still, as a good reader of faces, he thought I mightn’t know the custom. He spoke good English, for they had taught him that at the station, but the old mendicant habits could not be eradicated. Mary, the gin, was all a pure invention.

Bairnsdale, or, as the natives called it, Wy Yung; or 'The Young Duck,' is a very rural town, with splendid ground all about it—the ideal of a settlers' village-town. All the natives are hearty, and without that affectation of dignity which always makes me creep into myself, like a snail into his shell. I like men to feel, whatever their earth-time position may be, that we all come into the world in the same condition—naked—and must all go to the worms, unless we are mean enough to cheat these ministers of fate of their lawful rights by leaving directions behind us for cremation.

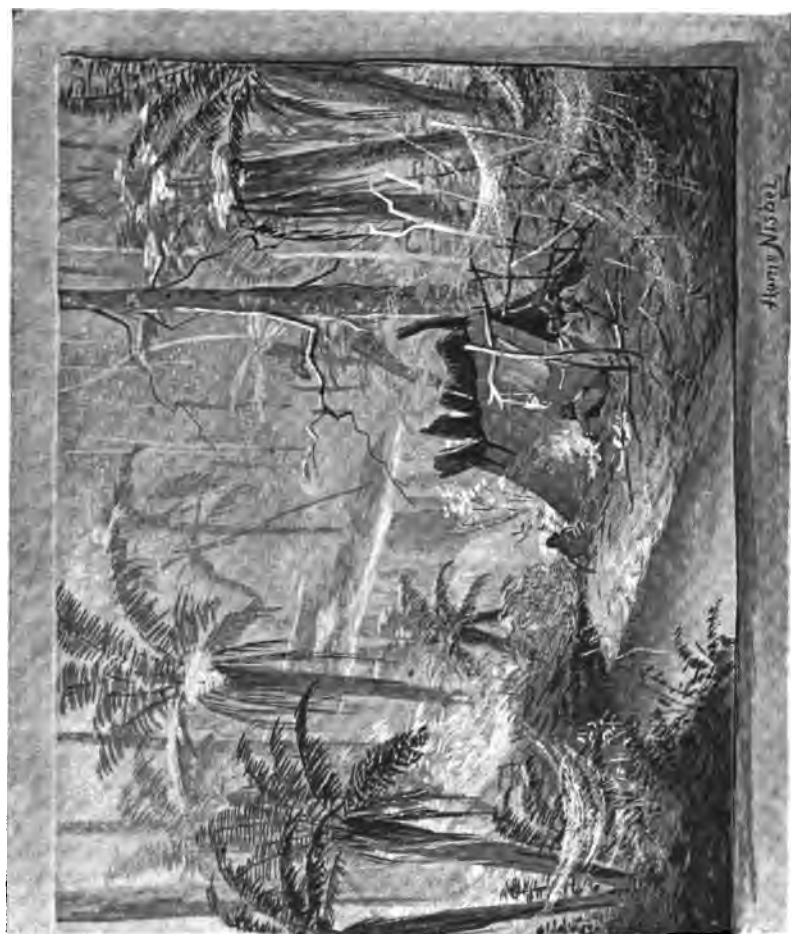
Through the Lakes once more, after leaving 'The Young Duck,' which I was fortunate enough to visit once again, and that after I had finished my wanderings of the year. I like to think of it as the place where I packed up my sketch- and note-books, for I have not one unpleasant memory connected with it.

From Sale to Rosedale the distant view of the Alps is very fine, with the river glimpses in front, and the black swans flying back from the sound of the rushing train (I notice, as they spread their wings, that the extremities are white, which is not seen when they are in repose). There are broad acres of cultivated fields in the middle distance, with great quantities of dead-wood between.

That night I was fortunate enough, by a fluke, to get a bed at Yarragon, after seeing Trafalgar and Moa, with the Haunted Gully. I was once more in the forest, and amongst the selectors.

It was upon the eve of the forest-sports, and all the farmers, bullock-drivers, and stock-riders round had gathered into the small township, and filled to overflowing the little public-house. Supper was in the good old-fashioned style: the servant carried round a gigantic tin teapot, and filled up the cups as she passed; then came the

ABORIGINAL HUT IN FERNS GULLY





hash, or stew ; and each one helped himself to sugar, bread, and potatoes, when he saw a chance. It was rough, but hearty, and plenty of it, as there was of customers. One little Frenchman diverted the company very much. He was on the verge of delirium tremens—that fine nervous state before the ‘blue devils’ appear, when the wit is so high-strung and electric. He had been on the drink for weeks, getting more and more *spirituelle* every day. I saw him that evening at his best and most fantastic, as he tossed down the raw brandy, and jested like a Mephistopheles. Before morning his expected visitors had arrived, ten thousand strong, and he had to be lashed down to the table.

They told me that they were full, but, if I didn’t mind sleeping with three or four other men, that they could put me up for the night. When bedtime came, I told the landlady that I would just stay where I was, and sleep on the floor, as I didn’t like sleeping with men. Then she told me to hold on a bit, and she would see what could be done. After a little time she beckoned me mysteriously to follow her quietly, which I did, to find myself in a most comfortable bedroom, with plenty of room. The kind-hearted woman, seeing I was a stranger, had given me up her own bedroom.

Early next morning I went for a walk in the forest, where I fell upon a young man who had come up from Melbourne to look out for a selection ; it was he who told me of the wind-up of the Frenchman’s wit. He asked me how I managed to get through the night ; and when I informed him, he said I was lucky, for there had been six of them in the bed which he occupied, and the Frenchman had been one of them.

‘It was awful, for they all came to bed uproariously drunk, and incapable of taking off their boots ; so that,

what with the kicking about, and the mad leaping of the possessed Gaul over the stomachs of his bedfellows, I was not able to enjoy much repose.'

I laughed at his account of the night, and then told him of one night, a little similar, which I had once passed in my boyhood.

'Some friends of mine—there were four of them—having spent most of the money which they had brought out from England with the Melbourne barmaids, made up their minds to try the gold-diggings; so we all set out, I going half a day's journey with them, to keep them company and say Good-bye.

'We got to a little wayside shanty as night fell, so we resolved to spend it here in a farewell drink, and say Good-bye upon the morrow. It was one of those places where diggers called at coming to and from the diggings, with just enough accommodation for travellers on a pinch. Behind the bar a very ugly and middle-aged woman served the drink. She was the mistress of the shanty. I was young, and unused to liquor, so that very little took effect upon me. Before I had tasted the first glass I remember taking notice of her, and the number of gaudy rings upon her thickly-jointed fingers, and thinking how very repulsive-looking she was.

'But as I sipped my brandy-and-water a curious change seemed to come over this lady: her age and ugliness gradually fell from her, until (I think I had got the length of my fourth glass) she became one of the most radiant young nymphs I ever had seen in my life.

'I loved her madly, all of a moment. She was the maiden I had dreamt about. True, there seemed to be a soft mist enveloping her, into which she occasionally faded; also, the sham stones of her rings seemed to be strangely multiplied, likewise the paraffin lamps along the walls.

‘ I got up, and staggered towards this beautiful creature, and, seizing one of her jewelled hands, kissed it passionately, while I told my love in language the incoherence of which might have been excused for the sake of its earnestness.

‘ “ Poor boy,” I heard her murmur, through the sound of the kisses which I was imprinting on that lily hand. “ So young to be so drunk. What a shame of you fellows not to look after him.”

‘ As I heard those cruel words, I thought that I would go outside and enjoy the fresh air, so I tumbled towards the door, and, opening it, went out.

‘ Some good people may not be aware of the fact, but still it is a fact, that fresh air is not the best remedy for intoxication when any one has been drinking indoors. The night, when we entered, had been a sultry one, with a storm brewing. During the time that we had been drinking one another’s healths the storm had broken, and what had been nearly waist-deep of dry dust before had become a waist-deep quagmire of slushy but sticky mud.

‘ One instant I stood in the dark, with head bare, under the pouring rain, trying to remember something or other ; and then, with a sudden plunge forward, I landed head first into an extra deep waggon-rut, and thus went to sleep, with my head down, and my feet sticking upwards.

‘ When I woke I found myself in bed, and daylight streaming in at the window. It appears that one of my four friends had also gone outside after me, and seeing a pair of legs and boots sticking from the mud, he had made a clutch at them, and dragged me out of the mire ; then, with the assistance of the others, he had carried me up to bed, carefully put me, boots and all, between the sheets, and then—undressing themselves—they got in beside me, two on each side.

‘Doubtless, it must have been a crush, but then they were all too tipsy to know it. When we woke, I found the mud had become dry, and also that the two friends next to me were stuck fast to me; as for the state of the sheets, that had better be left to the imagination.

‘We all rose, looked at the bed solemnly, and then decided that the sooner we got away from that house the better it would be. So, stealing quietly downstairs, we paid our reckoning, and took our departure.

‘My friends saw me about half a mile upon my road home, and then went theirs. What a return journey that was, to be sure! I tried several times, by rolling on the grass, to remove some of the mud, but eventually had to hang about behind a low bush outside of Melbourne, until kindly night came to conceal my blemishes. Then I sneaked to my lodgings, and tumbled into bed.’

‘How did they get on at the diggings?’ asked the young man to whom I related this incident of early days.

‘Not much; they dropped in upon me one by one, like prodigal sons—footsore, bootless, penniless, and weary. The first returned a week after we had parted; a month of digging work sufficed for the bravest of them. The only things which they did bring back unimpaired were their appetites, and these they kindly left me to look after.’ That was the beginning of our great commonwealth, before the married men and their wives joined our noble ranks.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BUSH

Monotony of the Bush—Yarragon—Size of Trees—A Young Man's Ideal—Laughing Jackasses—A Bush Church—The Bullock Driver—A Gentleman Selector's Paradise—Beaconsfield House and the Dandenongs—Weary Sundowners, a Theory—Farewell to Victoria.

AFTER breakfast this new-found acquaintance and I went for a long walk through the forest. He wanted to introduce me to a friend of his, a gentleman-selector—a man who had come out here with his wife because they enjoyed Nature, not because they required to make money. They were like Zimmermann and Rousseau—they were tired of the flippancies and narrownesses of society, and wanted peace, and freedom to do as they liked.

What a walk that was through the forest! People are apt to complain that, when you have seen one part of the bush, you may turn back, for you will not see anything different all over the land. But I never found this monotony in bush-land: every different part seemed to have a character of its own. This Gippsland bush was quite different from the Cape Otway bush: again, the bush-land going towards Sydney did not appear the slightest degree like the western and eastern parts; true, the gum tree was to be found everywhere, but even it altered its lines and form distinctly according to circumstances. I could wander for many a long year watching the Spring blossoms come

and go, and studying all the thousand varieties of an Australian bush, without feeling I had learnt enough.

Again, just when I had fancied I was done with the description of a walk through the bush, I always discovered, on looking back and thinking, that I had forgotten all the main characteristics of this particular part. Down Lorne way the general effect was drier and more crisp, although moister than Camperdown way. Here in Gippsland Nature was lushier—grasses grew ranker and more twining, plants seemed to be swollen in their stalks and fibres with juices. In the Otway forest Nature was lavish, yet robust; here she was riotous, as if filled up and softened with over-drinking. Flowers, ferns, grasses, reeds, and rushes swarmed up, and commingled in a crushing and overgrown fashion. They were all gigantic in their proportions, compared with ferns and flowers of the same species elsewhere, and all bulging with moist fatness: great thistles, ferns and fern-trees dripping with moisture at every leaf and frond; gigantic sprays of sweetbriar and brambles sprawled over the great tree-fences which lined the bush tracts; the gorse, nettles, and woodland weeds were like the weeds of a giant garden. The trees all seemed in unison with the undergrowth. We tramped on, like two pigmy giant-hunters, through the domain of the giants.

Yarragon lies buried amongst these mighty trees—a long line of street, with wooden, verandahed houses on each side, with a single line of telegraphs running through it. The gum-trunks are very massive here—big enough to hide the whole township if you stand a little way from one, and it gets into your line of vision.

Going through the forest on that occasion, we talked about the probable size of some of the biggest Australian trees. He said that the Gippsland trees were reckoned to be the biggest anywhere, with the exception of some in

Tasmania. He told me that he had met a man here, the last time he was up, who knew a man, who had been told by a friend, that a cousin of his had seen and measured a tree once which was five hundred feet in height and over ninety feet in circumference. Personally, I have lost a good deal of time going to distant places where these trees were supposed to be growing, but I haven't yet seen one so very large, although quite great enough to fill one with awe. As I walked round them, or in places sat under their arches when they were hollowed out, it felt like sitting inside an unlighted crypt, with the blackened beams and fresco-work on each side, and that undefinable space overhead.

My acquaintance was engaged in a bank in Melbourne, but whenever he had a spare holiday he spent it in the bush, keeping his eyes open, and looking out for a selection. His intention was to go on working at the bank, and out of his salary save enough to pay for the clearing and cultivating of his ground when he had fixed upon the site. He was young—barely twenty years of age—so was in no great hurry to settle down; but, like most young colonials, he had already mapped out his future: not to make too much money, but to live as the Latins did in their heroic days—cultivate his farm and his mind at the same time. How quickly one gets to love some people! We had not been more than an hour or so known to one another, and already we were confiding in one another our hopes and aspirations.

‘I shall do as my friend up yonder intends to do—leave the bush as I find it, excepting what is needful to cultivate in order to keep me and purchase books.’

‘And when you get married?’

‘I hope to marry a woman like the one my friend has got—refined, and yet contented with the life I mean to live.’

A wild burst of laughter broke out, as if in answer to this

reply, from one solemn-looking jackass, who perched himself upon an old stump opposite us—‘He! he!!! ha! ha!! ha!!!’—a burst of mockery which was chorused on all sides from the different trees. It was the most disconcerting sound I had heard for a long time, as if these long-billed cynics were enjoying the absurdity of the idea of any created woman ever being found who could sympathise in such a wild scheme, or be satisfied with one patched skirt and only the admiration of her husband, soulless bipeds that they were.

We passed at this moment a little bush-chapel belonging to the Roman Catholic religion—a little corrugated-iron building, with a pointed spire, and the only cleanly-kept channelled walk in the countryside; the other trails were all waggon-wheel, ploughed ruts of sticky mud. What an air of utter peace and seclusion reigned over this tree-surrounded little building, with its Norman-arched windows and door, and that little ribbon of a straight walk. Here loving care had been expended; all the taste the rough worshippers could boast of had been lavished upon it. How magical the effect of the rustic slab-crosses which decorated the ends of the roofs of the chapel, and priest’s hut at the back! A balm seemed to emanate from this quiet forest-nook, and give the lie direct to those mocking worldlings of laughing jackasses. Yes, here the woman had been found who had lived, loved, and sacrificed the dearest of her desires.

Farther along we came to a bush train-line—a single line of iron rails, running along over sleepers of tree-trunks. A rough ride it was, which we took advantage of on our return, sitting on the tops of the logs which filled the trucks, and rushing down the hill at a breakneck pace.

Soon after, the loud cracks of the bullock-drivers’ whips resounded through the forest, and, as we neared the spot where they were trying to drive their cattle onward, the

solemn hush was broken with language loud, resonant, and classical, such as I have heard on board ship, sometimes interblended with those revolver-like reports of the whip.

Every crack means a fillip of flesh out of some of the unfortunate hides of these dogged teams.

We found two of these worthy sons of the forest trying to extricate an immense tree-trunk from a swampy part of the bush, in which it had got embedded. Two teams of oxen were chained to the log, which they vainly tried to move, in spite of the adroit cracking of the two long thongs and the passionate terms of endearment which were poured upon them in an ever-varied and endless stream.

There they all stood, stupidly waiting, as if for some inspiration, some especial word or token of blasphemy which had not yet been uttered by their owners (although I would have thought that their vocabulary was well-nigh exhausted), before they could wake up, and begin to pull, paying, seemingly, no more heed to the little square flecks which each moment the whips tore from their sides than if they had been flea-bites, their heads bent forward, and their eyes luridly cast to the earth as they stood, two abreast, with the wooden yoke between them, like coloured statues of indifferent and brutish slavery.

The funny portion of it was, that all these seemingly ill-used and energetically-cursed-at quadrupeds had the most absurd sweetly-sounding and endearing sylvan titles for names, almost like a scene from Shakespeare's 'Midsummer Night's Dream.'

'Cowslip,' 'Daisy,' 'Bluebell,' 'Dewdrop,' 'Woodbine,' &c., &c.: they were all here, the fairies of the Court of Titania.

Both teamsters had deep, full, rich voices, and both had a regular routine in their eloquence; they always began in a gentle, loveable way, with—

‘Now then, Daisy! Get up, Bluebell! D—— your —— eyes! Cowslip, ain’t you going to budge.’ Then the voice rose, and roared, while the forest re-echoed with the most euphonious string of coined and acknowledged oaths ever heard from the tobacco-stained lips of blasphemous man. Nothing seemed too sacred or far-fetched to tack on as adjectives to these pretty, fairy-like names; while all the forest-birds seemed to pause in horror at the richly-resounding outpourings.

I watched the faces of these men when at their worst, and was surprised to see how simple and benevolent they looked all the while; they did not appear to be in the slightest degree more excited than the animals at whose devoted heads their anathemas were flung. I also observed that, after they had paused to swing round their heads the long stock-whips, preparatory to landing the lash on some sensitive part of the leaders’ sides, they began again in the soft tones just before the whip cracked; so that it seemed natural for the bullocks to prefer harsh words without accompaniment to tender tones with.

I believe that it is now considered a settled point of religion, even amongst bishops, that the swearing of a bullock-driver is not to be regarded as a breach of the Third Commandment, but that he must blaspheme if he wishes to be understood or respected by his team. It is said that their devilish minds cannot understand any other language, and that ordinary oaths will not answer in their case; that they are most epicurean in their tastes in this direction, and never will budge an inch unless some word specially blood-curdling is pitched at their ears: then, if it is fresh enough and revolting enough to stir up their torpid livers, they try to make an effort forwards.

The leaders of the teams are not generally chosen to fill these posts of honour as a token of regard; it is, rather,

a mark of hatred, for they get most of the whacks, and generally stand as the representative of some enemy of their owners. In such instances they are christened afresh by the name of this enemy, and enjoy life as he might do if he were in their place.

It is one of the common fallacies to consider a bullock-driver as an irreligious and even brutal member of society. This is quite as erroneous as to conclude that a butcher must be a ferocious character. Any one running away with this idea ought to stop until they have seen some of these worthies at church or chapel, or in the bosoms of their families, to know how devout they can be *after work is over*. But all this does not



1 Bullock Team.

interfere in the slightest degree with their business or sense of duty towards the cattle under their charge; indeed, if you have patience to listen to their flowery harangues for five minutes, you will be astonished at the extent of their Scriptural knowledge, and the names of ancient and sacred celebrities with which they are on intimate terms. A well-

bred bullock likes to hear all about Moses and Aaron, with proper prefixes, while he is calmly resting by the way.

Half-way up the hill is a sawmill belonging to the gentleman we are about to visit, and, a little farther on, his selection, one of the most delightful and artistically-arranged homesteads that I ever saw in my life. He has just thinned out the trees on his estate, so as to let his cows and sheep move about with ease, without spoiling the picture, and sown it all over with good feeding-grass. The master is from home when we make our call, but the lady of the house receives us both as if I had been an old friend also, forces us to stay to dinner, and, while it is being prepared, guides us over the ground, pointing out the improvements they have made, and where they have left Nature alone.

Down a little glen filled with wattles, gum and fern trees, we plunge after her over rustic bridges, while the crystal stream rushes below—a place for all the world like the Rhymer's Glen at Melrose, only much finer; for, whereas the great novelist made his glen, my charming hostess and her husband found this one all made for them. Surprises meet us at every turn—now a miniature waterfall, now a fallen tree, now a rustic bridge or stepping-stones to take us over; so we follow on, and climb upwards, until we reach the crest of the partly-cleared hill, to find a 'rest-and-be-thankful' seat, and a beautiful, extensive landscape over the forest-tops, framed in with a foreground of tall gum trees.

After that we go through the orchard, where the apples and pears are hanging thickly, into her flower and kitchen gardens, to admire the taste of the one and the well-cared-for, prolific order of the other; then through the poultry-yards and piggeries; and, lastly, into her dairy and the stables. All is perfect, rural, and ideal here, and the last

touch is given when, after a good dinner, we sit outside on the verandah smoking our pipes, while the lady sits inside her drawing-room, and plays and sings to us through the open doors.

It is late in the afternoon when we get back to Yarragon. The sports are over in the village, and the bars once more crammed with visitors. A hasty tea, then I say good-bye to my young friend, and start by the night-train for Dandenong and Berwick.

I was told not to miss seeing the Fern-tree Gulley and the Dandenong Ranges, so I religiously went over both places, and certainly had no reason to think that my time was misspent; for the extended range of scenery from the hotel called Beaconsfield House was uncommonly magnificent, both in colour and outline.

We drove from Berwick by coach to Beaconsfield House, on the Dandenong Ranges, at first along a fine, open country road, with hedges and fences lining it, and trees beyond; then up the mountain sides, all amongst cool woodlands, ascending upwards until summer changed to autumn, and the air became so cold that I was obliged to button on the overcoat which the driver lent me when he saw me shivering.

The people go to Beaconsfield House to recruit during the very hot weather. It is built on a large scale, yet not too overpoweringly grand for comfort; and the inmates all vied with each other in showing me kindness during the hour or so that I spent there.

A fresh, highland breeze greeted me as I looked over the vast panorama from the verandah, with the Dandenong Ranges under my eyes, and the waters of Port Phillip Bay in front; lap beyond lap of mountain and forest. It was my last look over Victoria for some months, during which time I was to traverse Queensland, and mix amongst

the savages of Papua ; and it was a noble, farewell look of swimming colours—sombre olive-greens blending into intense purple, again to fade away into cobalt-blues and delicate tones of liquid greys ; dove-wings of headlands brooding over amethystine and crystal waters, the farthest-off distances just a delicious stain, and no more, against the opal sky.

Oh ! the yearning for spirit-wings to fly which comes upon us as our eyes travel over the purity of such vast distances. It is then that we feel that we have souls which must live—that we do not perish like the beasts of the field. (But do they perish, either ?) The instinct to soar is upon us ; the inner wings of the soul are flapping against their narrow prison-walls. Are we caterpillars only, who must never progress beyond the chrysalis stage ? An eagle is floating away in mid-distance—possibly, only a ravenous vulture peering downwards for prey ; but he represents to us Eternity, as we look after him—Eternity, which seems so still, but which flies onward with such velocity.

I walk back from the Dandenongs towards Berwick, taking a circuit of the open country, sketch-bag on back, and enjoy such a lunch, put up by my Beaconsfield friends, as might last a backwoodsman for a week. Two weary 'sundowners' meet me on the way, and we squat together and finish it before we rise. Then they beg for a fill of my tobacco, and repay me by some of their experiences on the road. They are both long-bearded and much bepatched, leery, lazy, and contented with their lot. They have grown grey in the service of Laverna, and have not soiled their hands with work for many years, but have no care, for no winter chills trouble these loafers in Australia.

A sundowner is a gentleman who has all the instincts of the nobleman about him, but has been unfortunate in the

choice of his parents ; and so, in order to repair this cruel accident of birth, and imitate the lilies of the field, he rests



his body during the hours of daylight under the shadow of gum trees, with his swag beside him and pipe in mouth,

waking up each evening, one hour before sundown, in order to hunt out some benevolent householder who may be induced to give him a supper and a bed. Like 'Skimpole,' his wants are few, and all his tendencies are towards poetry and gentility.

I am inclined to believe that, when a very refined aristocrat dies, he has to '—do his time' in the carcase of a sundowner: so that the death of the one means the birth of the other. Therefore, Australians, look out for a big increase in the ranks of your future sundowners, since La Grippe has taken off so many of our 'upper ten thousand' here lately. The soul of an atheist who is very positive in his opinions goes into the body of a colonial bullock—that is why these awful beasts of burden enjoy blasphemy so much.

It is a delightful walk back, with wayside glimpses of distant ranges for all the world like Borderland near Smailholm Tower.

Long stretches of sunlit and shaded roads, lined with trees, and water-holes reflecting graceful trunks; a sweet glimpse of Berwick as I pass it by, and then I am back once more at Gessing's Gippsland Hotel, to pack up my traps and get ready for Sydney.

They have been a busy, yet pleasant, forty-four days which I have spent in Victoria. I have done and noticed a good deal, and enjoyed myself, during that month and a-half. I turn my back upon it with much regret, but look forward with pleasure to see it again, if I am not otherwise utilised by the economical New-Guinea cannibal.

CHAPTER XXII

NEW SOUTH WALES

Sydney—Peculiar Dreams—Liverpool—The Innocent Lag—Two Snake Stories—The Paupers' Asylum.

IF I had been in this world fifty years ago, and able to mark down notes then, I think I would have liked, above all things, to have described Sydney, its harbour, Heads, and murderous walls of rocks outside; but what is the use now, since it has been all done, times beyond number, already?

Therefore, since, fortunately or unfortunately, I was not born fifty years ago, I am going to pass over Sydney with a few words.

Do I think the harbour beautiful? Yes, surpassingly so; the most perfect and beautiful harbour that ever I saw in my life. Sydney Town? There is nothing any one can find fault with there, excepting the decorations upon the Post Office—the ginger-bread ironwork which some idiot has placed in front of the telegraph-wires by way of ornament and to cover these meshes—and the steam tramcars; and I think not even the most rabid lover of Sydney can object to my objections.

What remorseless rocks these are which greet us as we sail round the coast and look at the Devil's Gap, where the 'Dunbar' deposited her home-coming colonials so long ago! It almost takes us longer time than the seven miles' journey up the glassy harbour to forget the horror of

these jagged Heads ; but then, when we have forgotten the outside, how we can revel in the enervating luxury of those wooded islands, bays, and coves, with the snowy sands, and the palaces scattered about and rising out of their princely gardens !

We are in the land of the orange, the lemon, and the apricot ! What does not grow in the orchards of Sydney need not be desired.

One difference I notice between the women of Sydney and Melbourne : the former are lilies, and the latter are roses.

There is an old clock on the wharf at Sydney which filled a remarkable place in my life once, years before I ever saw Sydney. I dreamt a dream in which years passed away, all full of action ; the curious thing about this dream was that I forgot it entirely the next morning.

Time passed, and I visited Sydney, and left it. I remember I was just stepping aboard a Melbourne steamer when, glancing back, I saw this clock, with its square, wooden tower. Then a strange sensation came over me : I had seen the same tower, clock, even the hour the hands were pointing at, somewhere before. Where and when ? Then, as if a curtain had been lifted up from before a hidden picture, something seemed to be lifted up from my mind, and the long-ago dream flashed out as vividly as a negative when it is first developed in the dark-room. I saw every detail, and knew that I had lived through every incident in my dream. That old wooden clock had been the developer of my vision, for it had closed my dream, the time-hands pointing to the hour when it ended ; my spirit had been sketching all round Sydney before the brain knew anything about it.

We all know about dreams which seem as warnings ; but it is those dreams which anticipate things, yet signify nothing, which puzzle me mostly. Once in Edinburgh I dreamt

that, going through St. Patrick Square, I met a very commonplace woman, whom I looked back at after we passed; she was also looking back, and our eyes met, I looking indifferently, she with a frown. Next day I chanced to pass through that square, met the woman of my dream (whom I had never seen before), and got scowled upon for my pains when I looked back and our eyes met.

Five nights after this I dreamt once more that I was passing along the Bridges, when the same woman rushed hurriedly out of a shop right against me, and rudely asked me who I was pushing against. The following day that dream was repeated in every particular, even to the injured question.

Two weeks afterwards I dreamt for the third time that I was passing along a street—it seemed to be late at night, for few people were about—that I looked across the street, and saw my dream-woman dragging a drunken man along; our glances once more met, and again she treated me to a scowl of hatred.

Next night I was going home from a party and had to pass through this particular street. There, just as I had dreamt it, I looked across to see this woman dragging along the drunken man (probably her husband) and to be received with the evil glance.

And then these very senseless dreams ended abruptly; I never saw or dreamt about her any more. What did it all mean, and for what earthly or supernatural purpose had I dreamt it?

Sydney is a very charming place—the most ancient in the colonies—where any one with ordinary appreciation of beauty may go on dreaming his life away, and never wish to see the outside of the Heads. For particulars about it, read Mr. Anthony Trollope's description; when it could make

such a writer as he is grow almost poetic over its loveliness, it may well rank against the world.

I do not know what prompted me to take Liverpool as my first resting-place in this Colony, unless that it was one of the very oldest places in the Colonies and an early Government settlement. I wanted a quiet place to work up, for I was not feeling well, and they told me that Liverpool was a quiet enough place now, whatever it had been in the good old days of lagdom.

It stands on the river George, has several places of worship, and boasts of a benevolent asylum for paupers, a relic of olden times and British institutions (there are no pauper establishments yet in Victoria, that I saw). There is also a fine paper-mill here, over which I went, looking with interest on the process of transforming the foul rags of paupers and ratepayers into sugar-paper.

I saw an aloe tree here just on the point of celebrating its jubilee by blooming; it grew on the banks of the river George, amongst the prickly pears and the cracked clay banks, like a poet musing in a brickfield. The rains had not yet come to beautify the country, so that there was a decided cakiness and lack of greenery all about which struck me painfully. After my late experience of Gippsland, nothing quite satisfied me; but then I was not well, which perhaps accounted for it.

Then I fell ill, lay down, and had to get a doctor, who was one of the most generous and liberal-minded of medical men; he gave me a sleeping-draught, and after that a pick-me-up, which carried me right over the rest of my journey. I kept his prescription to help me with my notes, for it has got the official stamp of a chemist in every one of the towns I visited in the colonies, with the dates attached; a most useful prescription I have found it to be.

My doctor was very much against heavy drinking and

over-smoking, yet he did not altogether advocate total abstinence. Strict moderation was his motto: he always limited his patients to fourteen glasses of whisky per day, and not more than two dozen pipes.

There was an old friend with me at the time he gave me this advice. This friend was beginning to fear that he was falling into intemperate habits, and inclined to forswear all intoxicating liquors, but when he heard this his face brightened up wonderfully, and he cried gleefully, 'Dash it all! what was I bothering about? I'm all right, for I can't stand more than eight in one day.'

I heard a story here which shows how plucky the colonial boys can be. All the Australian boys are taught the necessity of guarding against snake-bites, and how to treat them, as a necessary part of their education. Two little fellows, six and eight years old, had gone into the bush to play; the smaller one, chasing a rabbit into a hole, pushed in his hand and brought it back quickly, with the head of a most venomous snake attached to one of the fingers.

'Quick, Charley!' he cried, putting down his hand on a stump close by. 'Chop off my finger—the snake has bitten it.'

Charley, without a pause, lifted his axe and chopped, not only the damaged finger, but two of the others as well. Then they both ran straight into town, over a mile distant, to a chemist, who plunged the bleeding stumps into the strongest ammonia and afterwards dressed the hand. Think of that, my staunch young Briton, and then try the effect of ammonia on a little scratch—and this hero was only six years old. That is what young Australia can do when he sees the necessity of it.

Another story from New South Wales about snakes. A young lady, high-bred and wealthy, was walking along the highway when she saw a snake bite a vulgar tramp somewhere

about the thigh. She sprang forward, killed the reptile with her parasol, and then, borrowing the tramp's pocket-knife,



knelt down, slit open his ragged trousers, and cutting a deep St. Andrew's Cross in his leg, applied her pretty lips to the wound, sucked out all the poisoned blood, and so saved his miserable life. I don't think any of the local poets ever made a poem on this action, yet when Australia's bard is born an incident of common life likethisrightlytreated will be quite enough to roll his name down time and make a classic for the colonies.

As I grew better at Liverpool, and more able to notice things, I got acquainted with an ancient lag who kept a shop where I bought writing-paper and such things. He did not deny that he had been sent out free

of expense, but, like most of the convicts, said he had been

innocent of the crime charged to him ; he had been a lifer for stealing, but was most unjustly charged.

‘You see, I was a working chap in Birmingham,’ he told me, without mentioning his particular trade. ‘An honest working chap and a married man. Well, one night when I had naught to do, I thought I’d go down to the town and have a drink. My old woman says, “No, don’t go to-night, Jim” ; but I says “Yes,” and I went, more to my sorrow.

‘Well, I goes into a pub where I was known and calls for a pot o’ beer, and while I was a-drinking of it a gal comes in as I knows, with a bloke alongside of her. I didn’t object to that—how could I, with my own gal at home ?—but I was frisky-like, as you might say, being a young fellow, so thought to have a little joke, and, going gently over to the fireplace, I picks up a bit of glowing cinder, and drops it down her neck right in front. Lord ! I didn’t mean no harm, but just a joke, as it was.

‘Well, you wouldn’t believe it, but that ’ere gal sets up a yell enough to frighten the dead when she feels the hot cinder pinching her, and her bloke hit straight out at me and knocks me down.

‘No man alive could stand the like o’ that, so I just jumps up again, takes hold of the heavy iron fender, and hits him over the nut, splitting it like a turmit, and bolts out, with the landlord and the rest after me full swing.

‘The bloke died ; but perhaps it ’ud gone all right with me at my trial, only in my hurry I carried away the fender with me. At any rate, I was copped, clapped in quod, and that cursed fender brought against me ; they lagged chaps for stealing in them days, so I was lagged, and here I be, none the worse of it after all !’

‘Then you were not tried for murder ?’

‘No, they forgot all about that, for it was an accident.

I was sentenced for life for stealing that cussed fender, a thing I was as innocent of as the babe unborn.'

I looked with admiration upon this innocent old convict, while I meditated upon the glorious laws of my native land.

'And what about your wife?'

'Oh, she joined me arter a year or two, and we set up in business here and did fairly well. She died two years ago.'

Good old man, spending the residue of thy days under the shadow of the Benevolent Pauper Establishment, and wise old law which permitted thee to do so! Thou hadst not yet been able to appreciate to the full the whole point and humour of thy merry cinder joke; I expect thou art waiting for the martyr's reward in another state!

That there should be any necessity for Asylums for the Destitute in Australia is to me a source of profound astonishment. In England the matter is different. Our iniquitous Game Laws prevent the poor man from helping himself to the food which God has created for him, therefore it is but fair on the part of the men who rob the poor man of his heaven-created food to keep him in some other fashion. In Australia there are no Game Laws, therefore there is no necessity for any man to accept charity, or be a pauper; he has only to go out and hunt, as the savage does, for his living. Again, in England winter reigns over half the year, demoralising the bravest of independent spirits. In Australia there are no winters to lock a man out of work, and freeze his wife or children; therefore the sight of such a place as this Paupers' Asylum maddened me that people could allow themselves to be so degraded in such a land. It is only fit for boorish serfs and unredeemed convicted criminals, not for free men who have the rare fortune to claim such a land as this for their birthright.

For what have we old worldlings to be proud about, compared to them? These ruined castles where our masters

lived, and rode over us? These monasteries where men were glad to hide their degraded heads and seek sanctuary from outrage and death or worse? These titles which represent robbery or prostitution? These laws which were framed to grind down the poor? These forbidden fields, moors, mountains, valleys, rivers, and lakes? What have we, the poor, to be proud of as Britons? What have the masters to be proud about, when compared to the heir by birth to this new and untrammelled land?

I was tramping along the side of the George River thinking these democratic thoughts, when I came across a family of miserable-looking aborigines. Two of the men were standing up fighting over the remains of a bottle of rum which one of the gins held in her hand; they boxed each other after the fashion of English prize-fighters, because it was English produce they were fighting about. It was an interesting sight to see these poor outcasts observing so rigidly the laws of the ring, and as I watched them my enthusiasm about colonial birthright cooled down considerably. Yet after all it is a grand country to be born in, no matter how it was gained.

There is an appearance of oldness about Liverpool which is very taking to the artistic eye after the new-fashioned towns I have been going through—a ramshackle air about the houses, with weatherboard and whitewashed walls mixing about. The house where I lived was delightful, with chimneys and walls at all sorts of angles, and creepers clinging about the irregularities, rare cacti in flower, blackthorn and different varieties of wattle, arbours of vines, with the black grapes hanging in heavy clusters, and over all this a sleepy air of inactivity which suited my convalescent mood exactly.

I was amused at the monument which some of the convicts had erected in memory of Captain Cook, and the

original spelling upon it : ‘ Erected in 1858 during the time of Charles A. FitzRoy, K.C.B., and *Govenor* General xiii. to Captain Cook who was killed at the *Sandwich* Islands, 14th February, A.B. 1770.’ The Public Gardens at Liverpool are as yet only pegged off, although the town has been so long in existence ; they move leisurely along in this part of the Colony.

CHAPTER XXIII

CONVICTS

Some Reasons for Leaving out New South Wales—Mittagong—
Berrima—Convicts—Bowral—A Walk to South Head.

I do not know where the place is, however insignificant, that some reader will not be found who considers it the most interesting portion of the globe. If I do not have so much to say about New South Wales as of some of the other portions of Australia, it is not that I thought less of it, but rather because it has been already so much one by others that there was very little left for me to do outside the groove, and as I went over the land during 1886 for a special purpose, every hour had to be considered. Also, as I am writing this book for a special purpose now, which is to make my readers acquainted with those portions of the land which are still open to them, I wish to hasten away from this Colony as fast as possible, it being of no earthly use to them now, as it is a land already possessed, with no room for outsiders, unless they are specialists in some walk of life.

I do not want to tempt any poor man to go out to Sydney thinking to make his fortune there, for, candidly, I don't think he will, any more than he might in London. When I want to lure you on, ye seekers after comfort and happiness, it is the young unmarried women I intend to describe. Neither you nor I have any right to talk about

the perfections of the wedded and done for. Leave all that for the husbands, if they like.

New South Wales is married and possessed, therefore out of our reach. Years ago, when she was open for competition, seductive was not the word for her exquisite perfections—but those days are all past for outsiders, so let us lift our hats respectfully, and pass on to pastures new.

Mittagong—my next halting-place—I took because a Sydney acquaintance advised me not to miss it. Why? Because here he had courted and won his wife, and never could forget the loveliness of the ‘Ten Foot Gully,’ where she murmured ‘Yes.’

I went there on his recommendation, and because it was near Berrima, where the strictest of colonial prisons stood. I had heard about it often, as one hears about the Bastille or Inquisition. Here was the bed of roses and the thumb exercise practised, or, worst of all to mindless criminals, the ‘black hole.’

If a criminal was extra-troublesome at other prisons, they threatened him with Berrima, which was generally enough to subdue the most case-hardened, and make a lamb of him.

Berrima stands on the Wingecarribee River, at an elevation of about 2,300 feet above the sea. Therefore it is, as might be expected, a very healthy locality, in the midst of a very rich mineral district—copper, coal, and iron ore. It is a small township, with about 450 inhabitants, for people, as a rule, do not enjoy themselves in the immediate vicinity of such a prison. This prison is conducted on the ‘silent system,’ *i.e.*, captives are not allowed to speak. If they dared to break the rules, they were punished so severely that few ever repeat the offence. This is the very last place where criminals are sent, and only the most desperate. They are cured here completely

of their moral diseases, they tell me. Darkness appears to be the terror of those crime-children.

I tried the 'black hole' for twenty-four hours, but on me it had no effect beyond that of making me fall asleep, and so giving my eyes and brain a good rest. It was so soothingly and completely dark that I never knew when my eyelids closed over my eyes. I only know that I was roused up, much the better for my voluntary incarceration, by the warder's coming in and saying 'Time's up.'

Perhaps because it was *voluntary* may be the reason why I did not suffer. I have tried to imagine the state of a prisoner who has been condemned, say, for life, but found it well-nigh impossible—the sentence first gradually unfolding all its horrors, no more effort required for daily bread; the future provided for, with a daily routine which will never be varied—each morning to be roused up by the clanging of the prison bells; then the blankets to fold up, according to rule, and the cell to tidy; then out to the exercise-yard, or the labour-shops; breakfast and exercise, dinner and exercise, tea and bed; while all through the night, the hourly waking up as the warders march along the passages and shout, 'All's well.'

What has been taken from him in exchange for this daily providing for the animal? Liberty—the being able to do and go where he likes; hope—the incentive to exertion; love—he must live for ever mateless, with all his natural desires raging like devils within him.

I have gone through a good many colonial prisons, and talked to all kinds of criminals, from the gentlemanly forger, swindler, and medical side-walker, down through the fine gradations of bushranger, housebreaker, pickpocket, and sneak kinchin man.

Once I talked to a young fellow who had been taken in the heyday of his professional success as a gentleman-

swindler and Don Juan. He went mad after a fortnight of the monkish routine, and passed twelve months in a beautiful land, which ordinary unimaginative mortals can never hope to enter into.

‘It was the want of the wine and the women did it. Lord! I had the best of them both—ladies who hung on to me like worshippers before the shrine of a saint, wines of the rarest vintage, cooking the most expensive, and, sweeter than all, paid for eagerly by the fools who let me dip into their purses as I liked.

‘Then, with a bang, it was all shut off—fine clothes, exquisite perfumes, love-notes pouring in each morning for assignations of the night, soft arms and tender whispers in the moonlight, gleeful nights, when one had to yell out with the intensity of the moment; for into every moment was crammed the excitement of weeks of an ordinary man’s life, not knowing whether it might be the last or not. It was like rushing round in a whirlpool at full speed, clutching at every pleasure as it spun past, and bolting it down as quickly as possible, never thinking, or attempting to economise either vitality or dinner.’

‘There you were an ass,’ observed his cynical but calm prison chum, a bank-robber, whose plunder had never been discovered, although he had been convicted. ‘I always considered the future, and the consequences. When the job came off which I am now serving for, I married the woman who had helped me, so that she could have no interest in giving the swag up to another fellow, and put her away. When I come out, she’ll have to give an account of it, you bet. Meantime, I can afford to lie by.’

‘But you were always cold-blooded, Bob,’ answered the swindler, and then went on: ‘I spent one fortnight in hell, and then something snapped inside my brain, and in a second I had all my desires gratified—lovely girls, delicious

wines, the best of cookery. I had only to wish for a thing, and it was mine; want to see a place, and I was in it. Everyone received me with love and admiration. I tell you what: if all madmen are like I was, I envy them their heaven, for I never spent such a happy time in my life as I did in that lunatic asylum over there. It was exactly what a fellow may have in the other world, if the gaol-parson is to be credited.'

I was looking over the governor's garden of one of the prisons, when an old prisoner who acted as gardener hobbled forward, and asked for permission to speak to me, which the good-natured official granted. This old man was a lifer, and had been charged with murdering his fellow-shipmate. He had already passed fifty-two years of his life in different gaols throughout the Colonies.

He told me his story in a few words. Fifty-two years ago he had come out as apprentice in a ship to Sydney. The first night after they landed, one of the other lads and himself were going along the street, when they were suddenly set on by a party of roughs, and, before he could defend himself, he was knocked to the ground insensible.

When he recovered himself, he found that he was in prison, charged with the murder of his friend. The roughs had all decamped on hearing the police coming. He had been found beside his companion, both with blood-stained sticks in their hands. It was supposed that the two had quarrelled and fought, and that his blow had been fatal.

For more than half a century the old man had not spoken to a woman, and before that only as a mere boy. His request was a simple and pathetic one: he had heard that I was an artist; would the governor let me draw him a woman, and afterwards let him keep the sketch? The governor nodded his head, and turned his back upon us

while I sketched him the picture he wanted on a leaf of my sketch-book, altering it according to his suggestions, for the old man had an ideal which he wanted realised.

When it was done, he took it from me with trembling hands, his eyes bright with excitement; and after a long, greedy look, he opened his shirt-front, and put it, face inwards, against his heart; and then, thanking me, with a husky voice, hobbled back again to his spade and barrow.

Many prisoners are discovered with the likenesses of supposed lovers tattooed upon their arms; this leads to their identification often. Yet, for all that, they would not want the comfort gleaned from it in their lonely hours; it is their only consolation in gaol, and their greatest punishment. To a sailor who has been shut up for a long voyage with only men, and a prisoner who has just finished his sentence, the first woman they meet, no matter how old or ugly, is the most lovely object they can think about; at such a moment the most hardened criminal might easily be converted if the angel who meets him as he rushes out free is a good one. He is dragged into lower depths if she is a devil.

I looked over silent Berrima in the twilight as we drove away. All the sky was luminous and yellow-tinted, while the prison lay, with its surrounding tumbledown out-houses and palings, gloomy and sombre; not a stir in the sky or from these walls to break the awful spell—it was a scene of soundless horror and patient crime, waiting on the moment of liberty and revenge.

Mittagong lies also on the high level. Being 2,069 feet above the sea, with a cool air always, and very keen nights and mornings, we were glad to draw close to the big log fire during the evening. I was now beginning to feel the necessity for my thick winter overcoat; I had unpacked it at Sydney, and had to wear it each night I went out, right

up to Thursday Island. In the semi-tropics, particularly, some of the nights are very cold.

The bush and gulleys round Mittagong are very picturesque and rugged: not so much vegetation and greenery as in Victoria, but more rugged, rocky, and stern, after the Salvator Rosa school of pictures—places where tramps in their rags and masked bushrangers would be appropriate. I did not meet any bushrangers at this part, although I have seen them in past days; but I saw the camp-fire of a swagsman, one evening, through the trees, with a fine weird effect of lurid colour and deep shadow.

I walked over, one afternoon, to the pretty town of Bowral, a place of about 800 inhabitants, which nestles amongst a perfect garden of fruit-trees—orchards of apples principally—with nice, old-fashioned farms lying about the well-cultivated country.

I have seen all that I want to see for the present on the Southern Railway, and feel once more ready for work and braced up by the mountain air, so take the train back to sweet Sydney by the sea, the queen of ocean cities and home of luxurious palaces.

What an awful monster that is which comes roaring along the main street, vomiting out clouds of dirty smoke over this fair, sunlit city; a ruthless monster, which demands its weekly victims as sacrifice, either unwary man, woman, or child, who may trip and fall before its approach; as ugly and reasonless a malformation as ever Frankenstein raised up and let loose—the steam tramcar.

It is going out towards Woolloomooloo, so I jump on board, in spite of my hatred for it, and it goes on, snorting and defiling the air. I have a couple of days more on my hands before I can go to the Blue Mountains, therefore I mean to pass them amongst the many bays with which the harbour is scalloped out. I have already gone through the

Domain, the Botanical Gardens, and Lady Macquarie's Chair and convict-carved walk ; I want now to get the length of the South Heads.

I leave the car near Woolloomooloo, walk on through Paddington and Woolahra, and strike away from streets by Double Bay. What a delightful walk as one goes down the steep hill to the harbour—promontories, heads, islands, and sails of all sizes and shapes dotting the blue waters, while the fore part is filled in with the feathery tops of gardens !

Next I pass by Rose Bay, and get a delicious peep of it through a broken rail all covered with weeds and tendrils of honeysuckles and wild briar ; ships, yachts, and buildings, peeping out of the richest of foliage, are everywhere to be seen, with rocky promontories and golden sands, and clusters of sea-birds waddling about.

Then I come to shady portions of the way, where high rocks of sandstone rise up and shade the road, all wet and glistening with the moisture which drops from the wooded banks above. Here is a stone horse-trough, into which a crystal stream pours constantly from an iron spout, and, running over, trickles along the roadside among the rushes with a pleasant sound.

After this the road begins to rise as I approach the Lighthouse, and I look over a stretch of scrubland, rocks, and swampy ponds, to the North Heads, dark and stern, with Watson's Bay below me, and glimpses of the open sea beyond.

I can never forget the 'Dunbar' as I look over these Heads. Long ago I used to ride over to them on horseback, particularly if there was a storm brewing. How I used to love flying along these roads about midnight, with the lightning and wild-fire playing about, and the poor horse snorting with terror at the flashes. On I used to urge him, till I could look over the cruel Heads at the surf breaking,

350 feet below me, at the foot of that upright wall, over which we perched—that horror-stricken steed and I. Then, when I turned him about as on a pivot, and he flew as if the demon was behind him until he reached his stables—oh ! that was exhilaration. All the while I was thinking, with sympathetic creeping of the flesh, upon those poor bodies which the cruel breakers dashed to and from the iron barriers, while the ravenous sharks tore the flesh in long strips from the bones. It was pitiful, the after-effects of the ‘Dunbar.’ Once I met a mad woman whose wits had turned the day after the wreck ; her only son was amongst the passengers, and he was coming home to comfort his widowed, solitary mother, after a brilliant career at Oxford. To send him there she had spent most of the insurance money which her dead husband had left her.

Well, they brought the poor woman a shapely arm to identify—all that remained of her pride after the sharks had finished their Heaven-appointed work. Ah ! those tell-tale, fatal tattooings which reckless boys sometimes will do at school ; he had the pirate’s symbol tattooed upon his forearm—a bungled skull and crossbones—and the sharks had ignored that scar ; so, when this piece of stamped humanity was handed up to the poor woman who had borne it, God kindly quenched her intellect. I used to meet her at times upon the South Heads, waiting, and looking out with a hopeful and happy smile upon the coming of the expected ship, ‘Dunbar.’

‘When my boy comes home I’ll be all right, for he has won all the prizes at Oxford.’

Happy old woman ! I wonder how much her son will think of owl-like Oxford, and all his poll-parrot prizes, when he welcomes this martyr to the land of Beulah ?

It was the hour of sunset as I turned back towards Sydney. I got a glimpse of the harbour, islands, head-

land, and city, with the Blue Mountains behind, just as the sun was dipping below ; and when I was half-way down the hill towards the horse-trough and varnished rocks, a glimpse through the openings of the trees, of water, shipping, fort, and spires.

A golden vision, like that of St. John of Patmos, this was—Sydney, like a queenly bride, arrayed in purple, against a canopy of jewels set in massive gold, at her feet the fort, and islands, and pavement of burnished ore. Unlike Anthony Trollope, I am not a post-office man, so that I cannot think of foreign stamps at this moment, or compare this vision to Naples, Dublin Bay, the Bay of Spezzia, New York, or the Cove of Cork ; I can only think of St. John at Patmos, and cry, in my poetic passion, ‘ Jerusalem the New, thou hast arisen.’

CHAPTER XXIV

OLD SYDNEY

Old Days in Sydney—George Barrington—Convicts and their Masters—My Friend, the Sea Captain's, Yarn.

SYDNEY, being the oldest of the Australian cities, has, naturally, the most to boast about in the matter of history, and I daresay there is no locality in the world so richly-endowed with incidents and material for the novelist.

Those early days, when the country was divided into two distinct castes—freemen and convicts—are literally crammed with romantic and tragic stories, so that one has only to sit down and listen to some of the old natives, and hear their reminiscences of childhood, to know the after-history of some of England's greatest criminals. They all came out here to retire from public life, and in most instances to redeem their past; although, of course, there were exceptions to this golden rule, who left almost unparalleled records of atrocious and revolting crimes before they expiated their offences on the old Gallows Hill.

Here the gay and fascinating pickpocket, George Barrington, came out to end his life as a most exemplary citizen and magistrate. There is a story told of his remarkable dexterity which does not reflect much to the credit of the lady who put his *gifts* to the test. Shortly after his arrival, while he was acting as servant to one of the officials, his

mistress sent for him, and telling him that, although she had heard wonderful tales of his quickness, she did not believe the half of them, defied him to rob her as she then stood. Polite



SYDNEY HARBOUR, FROM DOUBLE BAY

George bowed, and said that she was quite right; it was impossible for even the most adroit thief to steal from the person of such a sharp-eyed lady as she was.

‘But I’d like if you would try.’

George protested, while she urged him to give her a sample of his skill. At last she lost her temper, and ordered him back to his work, telling him that the people must have been very simple who could allow themselves to be robbed by such a poor pickpocket as he must have been.

‘Yes, madam,’ said George, bowing again as he turned to go out, ‘unless these few trinkets belong to you’; and he quietly handed back to her the ear- and finger-rings, &c., which he had taken from her while he was protesting and she urging.

The lady was struck dumb for a moment, as she took back her property; then, with a face of scarlet, she observed: ‘You are a little too clever for my service, Mr. George Barrington.’

That same day George received his reward by being sent back to prison-duty. It was the last time he exhibited his powers; after that he settled down to rectitude, and gradually grew to be respected both by colonial society and the Government.

An old sea-captain once told me that he had made several voyages to Sydney with convicts. Once he took out a housebreaker who had been sentenced for life. Next voyage he had as a passenger the wife of this convict; she came out, paying her passage, to be near her husband. The third voyage, he found them both doing a thriving trade, she as the mistress, and her husband as her ‘hired servant.’ He made a few more voyages after this, to find them better off every time he called upon them. The last time he saw them the wife was owner of half a street and a wealthy woman, her consort-servant likewise enjoying her prosperity.

In such a case as this the wife had the best of the position, as she could always send her husband back to

prison and punishment if he misbehaved himself in any way.

In the olden days 'free colonials' could always hire convicts to work for them in consideration of their keeping them in food and clothes; that was how many fortunes were built up. It was always the aim of a convicted man to get 'hired' out, if he could, as it meant more liberty and comfort; while he had a strong incentive to good behaviour in the fact of 'punishment' being held before him: all a master had to do was to give the offending servant a polite line to the governor of the jail, which he had to deliver, as a schoolboy does, and get his punishment—either the 'cat' or be sent back to the chain-gang.

Of course, this sort of absolute mastery over human beings could not be good for the owners, any more than slavery can be for the drivers. It tended to develop even generous men and women into tyrants, and make cruel minds more brutal. I have seen the daughters of convict-owners, who had grown up amongst the bondsmen, think no more of striking an old servant on the face with their whips or canes for some carelessness than one might of whipping a disobedient hound—a treatment which the 'lags' much preferred to being dismissed. But it sends a curious thrill through the onlooker, who has not been used to this sort of thing, to see a refined, tender-hearted lady beat her old gardener or groom, while he receives the blow meekly. However, the young people of the Colonies have outgrown this; it is only their mothers or grandmothers who are apt in moments of abstraction to hark back to the olden habits.

Still, with all their social disadvantages, the Sydney people were a generous, simple-minded, hospitable race, very free and kind to strangers who came out without the prison slur upon them. A great number of the convicts were men of rank—such as Sir Henry Hayes, a gentle-

man from Cork, who was transported for attempting to win a wife, like the ancient Romans, by stealing her, and who, like St. Patrick, banished snakes from his estate at Vacluse, near South Head, by importing a cargo of Irish soil, which he put in a circle round his cottage. Old settlers affirm that no snake has ever been seen since that time near this charmed circle; and I never saw one there, although all round this country the black and other snakes used to be pretty plentiful. Political prisoners were always regarded by the colonials in quite a different light to criminals, and were allowed social advantages which the others were debarred from.

My old friend, the sea-captain, had, in his young days, gained a wife—one of the Sydney belles—after a long and obstinate struggle between him and her father. He had not kept the conditions which his father-in-law had laid down before giving his unwilling consent at last, which were that he must stay ashore; for when I met him he was still traversing the briny, with his wife by his side, as master and mistress of a merchantman.

She was then over seventy years old, tall and upright, in spite of the service she had seen. She had sailed all over the world, and her shapely figure had been a familiar sight for the past forty years to harbour-masters of every port. She was known as the Commodore, and her husband as Captain William Saunders. The Commodore, at the date I saw her, was just beginning to feel the hand of Time. She suffered from rheumatics, and twinges from an old flying-snake bite which she had got at some out-of-the-way corner where snakes fly about like butterflies in other parts. But she was stately and aristocratic, for she had come of a grand old blue-blooded family, and still showed traces of her vanished beauty.

Her husband used to say that he had been the most

unlucky man in the world before she had changed it for him ; since that time all had been sunshine and success.

His first set-off as skipper might have disheartened many a bigger man ; yet, what else he could have done than what he did (with the high sense of duty and honour which his seafaring father and grandfather had left behind them as about the only and sacred heirloom belonging to them to leave), I cannot say. He had been appointed to command a hulk that no other skipper could be induced to take charge of, to carry a cargo to the West Indies which the owners had heavily insured, with no thought of ever hearing word of again after it left the docks. But in spite of predictions and hopes, bad weather, and hands mutinying because for the best half of their watches they had to work the pumps, he did the voyage, and landed his charge safely at its destination, receiving as thanks for his exertions his discharge on his return home.

A discharged skipper may go a long time idle unless he can swallow pride, and take office as mate. William Saunders was proud enough, yet not too proud to work rather than loaf at home ; so he took what turned up, and sailed for the next few years as mate—sometimes first, sometimes second—until again a chance turned up, like a ghostly gleam of wintry sunshine. He got the offer of a little schooner that had been built for Australia, and which wanted a captain to bring her out. Again his seacraft shone out conspicuously, and he had the honour of bringing safe and clean into Sydney Harbour the smallest ship that had ever ventured so far from England. This time Dame Fortune actually cleared her brows as she looked at him : he was fêted and lionised by the impressionable Sydneyites, and might have had, for the asking, a dozen heiresses of influential merchants and landholders, who could not say ' No ' to anything their daughters asked them for, and

who, with a word, could have made even Dame Fortune turn her waterproof and laugh outright upon this young sea-captain.

But no ; he never was in the way of doing a wise action if it came backed by worldly prudence : so instead of taking one of the dozen wealthy young ladies, as he ought to have done, he was mad enough to fall head and ears in love with a young belle who had for a parent one of the proudest men in the colonies—a man proud of his blood, being a younger branch of the home blue aristocracy ; proud of his poverty—at least, what looked like poverty when compared with the wealth of each of the heiresses ; proud of his daughter, as being something of himself ; and, altogether, just the last sort of person William Saunders ought to have expected a grain of favour from in connection with his love affairs with that dark-eyed, aristocratic young maiden who, no more taking into consideration the obligations of her position than the young sailor had done his, not only encouraged his madness, but even surpassed him in the ardour of its display.

Day after day they met at picnics, and monopolised each other, until the heiresses became perfectly disgusted at her unmaidenly boldness. Night after night they met by the back-garden gate, under the lime and lemon trees, with the trumpet-flower bush wafting over them its subtle and intoxicating perfume, while the tarantula spun the heavy meshes of its web across the pathway, and the moon-rays fell over the scintillating dewdrops like the gleam from electric lamps ; they in black shadow, whispering fond nothings, and her proud old parent crouching down amongst the fig-shaded, but very damp grass near the front gate, catching lumbago in his aristocratic back, and watching, with a fowling-piece charged with small shot in his hand, for the coming of the audacious young sailor-scamp who dared

to look at his Mary, who, he thought, was at that moment sitting in her own room, busy working at her antimacassar, with the blinds safely down and the lamp turned full on.

At last things came to such a pass that exasperation gave place to anxiety, and the old gentleman, finding remonstrance and storming equally ineffectual to bring the maiden to reason, next bethought him of interviewing the young man; so, for the time being hosting a flag of truce, he summoned the enemy to a conference. William came, listened to the father's attempts to bribe him off with an immovable countenance, and only roused up when the father called him 'a mercenary, time-serving sneak.'

'I'll soon prove that this is not my motive,' cried the impulsive youth, as he flounced out of the apartment; and, without so much as a good-bye to Mary, he took ship as second mate in a vessel bound for Calcutta, and sailed away, leaving the old gentleman more than content.

But his happiness soon changed to consternation when Miss Mary took to her bed, and would not, or could not, eat.

'What is wrong with her?' inquired the father.

'The mind,' replied the doctor.

'How can she be cured?' asked the father.

'By giving her what she wants, and setting her mind at rest,' responded the doctor.

'Impossible!' cried the father, aghast.

'Then she will die,' said the doctor.

And so it came to pass that, when William got to Calcutta, there was a letter for him, imploring him to come home and marry his sweetheart; the poor aristocratic papa had swallowed at one gulp that mighty pill, patrician pride, and, willy nilly, had to ask the young man he despised to take his daughter.

William replied that he was coming, and Mary straight-way got well, as the wise medicine-man had predicted.

He transferred from the ship where he had been second mate to another bound for Sydney, taking the only available billet open—that of purser—and landed duly, master of the situation.

The old gentleman was just, if haughty, and having asked the young man in such a public manner to become his son-in-law, determined to make the best of a bad job, and, by using his influence, render him as nearly her equal as he could. He put some money into a ship, lent his future son-in-law some to speculate in the same way, got all his friends to invest, and finally handed the ship and cargo over to William to navigate.

Several voyages were taken in safety between Auckland, Dunedin, and Sydney ; the old gentleman had realised good profit by the concern, and William was in a fair way to become owner as well as skipper of the vessel. All that he made he invested in shares, so that at last he began to think that after another good voyage he could well afford to take a spell on shore, and make Miss Mary, Mrs. William Saunders. She was nothing at all loth to the arrangement, and, now that all obstacles were cleared, was as patient and as brave a sailor's lass as any one could wish to have.

Cheerily she went down the harbour with him, upon the day that he sailed, nearly to the Heads (no true-born Cornstalk will venture beyond). The sun shone down on the blue-green waters, which lapped the warm-tinted beaches of the many bays, as they passed down, breaking in little, white fringes amongst the pink and blue shells and tawny-coloured sands, the Gardens, with Lady Macquarie's rock-cut walk, appearing now and again between the thick foliage, which dipped into the sapphire, salt waves ; past Pinchgut Fort, and the islands which cluster about in all directions, and Woolloomooloo Bay—the Bay so beautiful always to his eyes, where she, now beside him, used to wait so

fondly upon his return, and where he knew he should find her, as Ulysses did his Penelope, ever tender and true.

Inside the Heads they parted, that warm afternoon, she giving him her tiny gold watch and slender chain in exchange for his more reliable and massive silver lever. They went through this foolish performance each time they parted ; and as the slender arms hung for a moment, along with the thin thread of gold, about his sun-tanned, thick neck, William felt that he wanted no other chronometer to guide his ship or himself into port.

A brush on the moist lips with his bristling moustache, the mingling of rose aroma and Negro-head, and she is over the ship's side ; a waving of handkerchief and brawny hand, and the peaceful waters of Sydney Harbour are left behind, as the bows pitch outside amongst the ever-tossing breakers, and William Saunders, taking out a fresh quid, and pocketing his hands, looks seaward, the responsible skipper once more.

A fair wind and a cloudless sunset the first day out ; a clustering of stars overhead, and the wake filled with glittering jewels the first night, as the officer on watch folded his arms, while he leaned against the rails smoking contentedly. A hot and oppressive morning the second day, with the sun looking brass-coloured, and the wind like the blast from a baker's oven. A night that no comfort could be gleaned from, as half the men lay helpless on the fore-castle deck, too much overcome with heat even to spin yarns.

Another day, and yet another, with the wind going down, more furnace-heated than ever ; then the hurricane, that was a ' brickfielder ' ashore, and the ineffable balm of that sudden downpour of tropic rain.

' Te Kotiro '—for so William Saunders had christened his vessel ; he did not like to call her the ' Mary,' so he named

her 'The Girl' instead, which meant the same thing—'Te Kotiro' made the voyage to Auckland, and thence to Dunedin, in safety, discharged her cargo, took a fresh stock for Melbourne, and then turned her head homewards, as she had so often done before under exactly the same circumstances, her skipper feeling at ease with himself and the whole world as he sat down in his cabin, reading over again one of Mary's long letters, and leisurely smoking his pipe while he read.

CHAPTER XXV

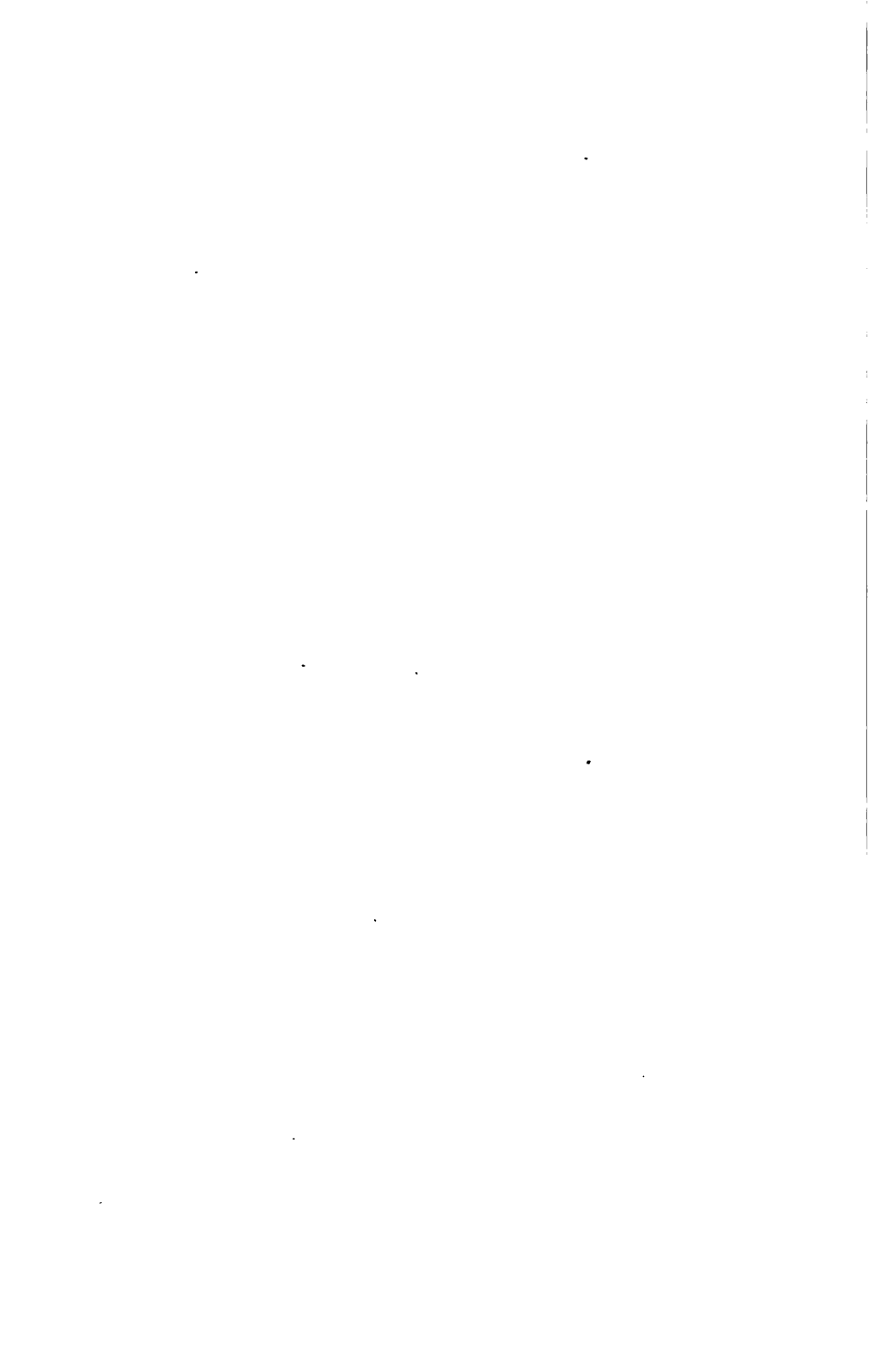
OLD SYDNEY (*continued*)The Sea-Captain's Yarn (*continued*).

It was in the dog-watch that the blast came, when least expected. The breeze had been light, but steady enough, this afternoon, so that all sails were spread out to catch what they could of it, making speed enough just to keep them solid on their tracks. Half of the men lay upon their backs, looking skywards, watching the wreaths of smoke from their clays, as they rose straight up for a time, then were dashed aside and scattered into the blue darkness of the night, and listening, as they lay, to the sounds of a concertina which one of the lads swung lazily about, as he, too, lay upon his back : a fair sample of the many nights at sea when a sailor's life is worth living.

The man at the wheel was the only one who seemed to have a mission aboard, and a hand over now and again, as he watched the lighted compass-box, comprised the whole of his task, as he stood, in darkness, and looked down upon that reflected light, with the waves singing as they surged past the vessel's side. Above, around, and in front, spread the clear blue, growing from deep emerald to blue-black as the eye wandered from the horizon to the vaulted clear space, studded with glowing planets from the near worlds like little moons, to the great worlds, pricking out a pathway through infinity with needle-points. Now and



THE SEA-CAPTAIN'S YARN



again a shower of lights would descend like rockets, leaving trailings of lustre as they, seemingly, disappeared into the dark waters, and for a moment or two making the opalescent night appear densely black to the startled eyes. But behind the man at the wheel was rising, and covering up the stars rapidly, a haze like a dark brown curtain.

The third-mate's watch was nearly up; he had gone over to the ladder which led down from the poop to the main deck, and while he waited for the sounding of the bell to be relieved, he listened to the sounds from the concertina, as it wafted towards him the air of a tune he knew well.

Flap! flap! went the sails against the masts and yards, and woke him to life.

'Halloa,' he muttered, looking up a moment at the hanging sheets, and for the first time observing that haze behind, now nearly over to the mizzenmast-top.

'Reef the mainsail!' he yelled quickly.

'All hands on deck! Cheerily, cheerily does it, lads,' and they are at the ropes as the words pass his lips.

It was all inaction a moment ago; it is all action now, as the men pull at ropes and dash up the rigging like monkeys during that short pause when the Storm-spirit, like a child who has been whipped, gathers in its breath. Then, with a shriek of fury, it is upon them. Crack! crack! and the two upper sails—maintop and mizzen-top—are away to the night, and with them five of the brave fellows so lately loafing on the forecastle-deck.

Then it was all over, ere one could realise that it had come; proving how frail are the works of man when brought into contest with the forces of Nature. Even as the luckless skipper, cramming his love-letter into his trousers pocket, made his appearance, the mizzen- and main-masts went by the board, and to cut them away was the only expedient left. All hands worked like madmen to clear that

awful confusion of rattling chains, clashing bolts, rustling cords, amid the appalling thunderclaps of these immense canvases, as the demon winds lifted them up, and pitched them, yard-laden, against the doomed foremast.

To look round for one dazed moment was the honest skipper's first impulse; then, as his mind took in the consequences to him of that fell disaster, he groaned, even while he instinctively took the axe from the hands of one of the stunned sailors, and set to work, like the rest, to clear the wreckage and attempt to save that solitary mast. Cutting for very life they all were, while the vessel slewed from side to side, paying no attention to her wheel, but receiving that furious blast broadside and sternway alternately. While that thunderous din went on, that fearsome shrieking and ripping of the blast, 'Stand clear!' calls out Captain Saunders, with a steady voice and a bursting heart, as the foremast snaps like a rotten stick, carrying all along with it, and tugging like fury at the fore-rigging and stays, while the broken bowsprit went under that solid level of foam-covered water. 'Cut clear, or she'll sink!' and he flung himself right upon the rope-work, axe in hand, hewing right and left like the giant he was. Another instant, and the blast had raced beyond that water-logged hulk, bearing on its wings all the loose cordage and canvas that had lately swung so gallantly aloft.

Then the men could breathe, and lift their poor, stricken skipper below; for, as the cordage gave way, by him swept a dead-eye or something, which struck the brawny arm raised to give another blow, and he dropped like one shot. The vessel tossed up and down on the rapidly-rising waves, which, freed from their late captivity, swarmed over bulwarks and decks like jackals preying upon the slaughtered victim—that poor hulk, leaking at every seam, no longer making an effort against her doom; while the stars came out again as

the waves sank to sleep, and everything went on as before, excepting with 'Te Kotiro.'

That wretched night passed over, the master lying like a log below, and the men at the pumps working without rest. Fortunately, the storm was soon past; and, as morning broke over the already-soothed waste of waters, one and all came to the conclusion that the boats were their only chance. The good ship 'Te Kotiro' must be abandoned, as she was rapidly filling: so, after a brief consultation, the chief mate took the command; and stowing the articles required for a sea-voyage into the launch—the only boat left to them out of that sweeping destruction—they carried up their still insensible skipper, placed him in the bottom of the launch, and then put off from the wreck, with the intention of reaching Dunedin, their nearest port.

Had William Saunders been sensible, I doubt if they could have got him aboard that launch; with 'Te Kotiro' and his prospects he would have gone under: so that we must consider Dame Fortune not altogether merciless in thus tempering her curses with oblivion. He had not spoken since he fell on deck; and they, poor fellows, could do nothing for him, except keep blankets on him and keep the water out.

All day they sailed in a straight course back; but at night it began to blow fresher, first puffing catspaws, then growing with the hours that passed, until, as morning again came, they saw that they were in for a more regular gale, and made preparations accordingly.

And so for hours they tossed and beat about those rising waves, with just sufficient canvas set to keep them before the wind (driving them at an angle from their course), until, just about the time when a deep groan from the blankets announced the waking up of their master, they saw in the distance a steamer bearing full down upon

them—a joyful relief to all, as they were quite tired out with their cramped quarters.

Half an hour later and they were safe aboard the mail steamer, *en route* for the town they had hoped to see in their own vessel.

There happened to be a doctor amongst the passengers, who brought the captain round ; his skull, being pretty solid, was not greatly the worse for the smash it had got in his fall against the bulwarks, and his arm, found to be broken, although long enough neglected, was set as best could be ; so that by night he was able to sit up and take some food, after which William Saunders, with arm in sling, began to look affairs in the face—and for him a dreary, hard face it had become.

The first thing he did was to feel for the little watch and the love letter. Both were safe, and that soothed him somewhat, after which he turned his back to the front of his bunk and fell asleep.

Meanwhile the steamer breasted the storm, and kept on her way in the teeth of wind and waves, beating the air sometimes with her propeller, to be again submerged in the whitey-green masses that dashed over her black sides, and whirled about her funnel, going slowly but persistently on her way in that dogged manner steamships have of facing a gale.

And the wind shrieked, and dark masses of cloud flew over the space above in a wild hurry ; torn patches of cloud-like shreds of canvas, skurrying in front of lighter grey clouds behind, with now and again a flash of white space breaking out, to be quickly closed inside the gloomy pall.

It was the second day of the storm that William Saunders got the last look of his ship and fortune. One of the men told him she sighted away to windward ; she was still floating, but water-logged to the last degree. This was

enough for William, so without heeding the doctor's orders to keep below and quiet, he hastily (with the aid of the man) dressed himself in his solitary shirt and trousers, and flinging an old pea-jacket loosely over his shoulders, he crawled on deck, and there, leaning on the arm of the honest fellow beside him, who understood and shared his feelings, looked upon her, as she slouched limply upon that mighty billow, the salt tears running down his sun-tanned, pain-bleached cheeks.

There she lay nearly up to the gunwales, a dead weight upon that swirling, living mass of froth-marked waters, about a quarter mile away from them, going with the waves which the steamer was beating against at an angle; her bows were full facing, and the dismantled decks could be seen with their torn stumps of masts and a few tattered cords, like thin tresses, fluttering in the wind, and seemingly disturbing the repose of a vast cluster of sea-birds, who had taken possession and now sat upon the slippery, wave-washed deck, some quiet, some with wings flapping as if to keep their feet steady, others rising and screaming when the loose cordage fell at moments amongst them, to be again tossed to the blast.

Behind her stern the sky was all broken up into masses of dark-grey with intersections of yellowish-white and purple scudwork behind. One immense cloud impressed poor William powerfully, as having the appearance of prints where he had seen allegorical shadows of the Angel of Death, coming on with inky, outspread wings, flying locks, and distended cheeks, with other clouds, like beasts of prey, spreading over that inanimate victim great misshapen paws as they hurried on their mission of destruction.

Away to seaward rose and fell huge mountains of white-crested or darkly corrugated waves, going from bottle-green to purple grey and pitching up wreaths of mist-foam, as

they clashed together, and blent with the purple-white of the intersections.

And over all swept a blast which bent everything before it, changing every moment, and seeming to eddy from between the cloud valleys, hurling slant-ways and in all directions that downpour of rain which struck against the cheeks like pellets of hail.

That 'Te Kotiro's' last moments had come all could see; the wave upon which she slouched seemed also to lie quieter around her in the midst of Nature's turmoil, the cords had ceased to flutter, for an advancing breaker yet afar off caught the fury of the wind and made a bight and an interval of repose around that glistening deck where even the birds seemed to be settling down to sleep. Then, as William dashed the back of his hand across his eyes, the end came. A shriek from the white cloud of bird-life, as they sprang from their prize in a crescent-shaped flight up to the blackened sky; the sounding of exploding decks and air-bulged sides like the thunder of a battery, then, with a bound into the air, stern and side were exposed for one swift instant, as the breaker behind reached up, smashing whitely against her and buffeting her, like a giant smiting a dwarf.

Short time to see it all, yet long enough to impress it upon that tortured brain, as the illumined country is impressed upon the brain of the man in the flash of that lightning stroke which shatters his all—a swift glimpse of the broken bowsprit cleaving the water like a wedge, and the rain-pour along the deck, arrested like congealed waterfalls as they are rushing to meet the waters in the hold, a rising up in a pyramidal shape of the wave as it yielded to the vortex, then down she slid like a thunderbolt, out of sight, carrying foam-buoys, curd-tracks and wreckage along with her, leaving above her a boiling

whirlpool, and as lamenters those wild circles of screaming sea-birds.

Nine days after the survivors were landed at Circular Quay about eleven o'clock on a Sunday morning. The skipper, after seeing his fellows all safely housed, went off as fast as he could towards the church where he knew for a moral certainty he would find his sweetheart and her father, whose stern and disapproving eye he tried to stimulate his ebbing courage against as he went along. Yet it was much better for him to be the bearer, than let any other precede him with the bad news.

He was a much more picturesque than pleasing object that sunny morning, as he trudged along in his weather-worn pants, old greasy engine-man cap which he had perforce to borrow; the ragged shirt and buttonless pea-jacket flung mantle fashion over his shoulders because of that arm in sling. Anxiety had made him oblivious to these externals, and fortunately there were not many people as yet abroad, the virtuous section being in the churches, and the reprobate portion not yet out of bed; so that he was only stopped once on the way by a charitable passer-by who offered a coin, under the supposition that he was a beggar, which he admitted meekly that he was, and humbly accepted with thanks.

The last hymn had just been read out when he got to the church gates, so he took off his cap and stood in the shadow side of the building, and thus waited for the coming out of the congregation.

As he stood there, haggard and dilapidated, it would have been difficult for a friend to have recognised him as the jaunty sea-captain who so lately sailed away; an enemy might, or a lover, for they say that love and hate sharpen the eyes wonderfully to likenesses. Still he was oblivious to all this, and might have done very well, had he stood a while

longer, cap in hand, as a recipient of public charity; for, as he gazed upon the faces of the congregation coming out, they dropped pennies quite naturally into the cap, without his being in the least degree aware of it. The Sydneyites of those days hated to see a beggar, and took what they thought to be the quickest way of removing these eyesores by setting them up in capital whenever they could.

By-and-by the old gentleman came out, followed by his pretty daughter, whose heart was far away 'o'er the deep blue seas.' He paused like the others to spare a copper, when his name on the lips of the beggar arrested his eye—that disapproving eye which William had so dreaded to meet; one flash, and he grasped the situation, and even as he turned back to scowl, Mary saw the man she was thinking of.

'William Saunders!' and she started back as if she had seen a ghost. Then his haggard face and broken arm caught her attention, and heedless of decorum, or dress, or disaster, away went Prayer-book, Bible, and parasol, and a tableau of contrast was created in an instant before the astonished eyes of the congregation, to the horror of her haughty sire, and amidst the derisive laughter of three of the heiresses who stood near by, the soft muslin blending with the sailor rags as she flung her warm arms impetuously round him, sobbing as if her very heart would break.

William responded with one arm, and bore the pain as she lay against the other like a martyr. I doubt if he felt any pain except the pain at his heart and the choking sensation from the lump in his throat for a moment or two; then the harsh voice of the stern parent recalled him to his senses, and sent the pill down with a gulp.

'Mary, come back from that scoundrel!—how can you look with anything except contempt upon such a bungling knave? Come back, and regard the ragged beggar, and say then what you think of your scurvy sweetheart.'



THE SEA-CAPTAIN'S YARN

'Dearer than ever, father, since he has come back to me,' sobbed poor Mary, still clinging to her lover, and regardless of appearances.

'Well, well! there is no curing that madness, except by calling in the minister, I suppose,' growled out the old gentleman helplessly. 'But tell us your news, lad. The ship——'

'Gone down, sir,' replied William, huskily.

'And is there nothing saved?' asked the father, savagely.

'Yes, sir, Miss Mary's watch and chain,' holding out the articles to the young lady as he spoke.

That was the last straw to the old gentleman's bad temper. I always believed that he was acting the stern father in the final scene, for as he saw the tiny watch some of the ludicrousness of the act appeared to touch his sense of humour, for he burst out laughing, and the heiresses laughed, and so did the congregation, and likewise the minister, who came out of the porch at that moment; and William showed his teeth and laughed also as he gave his whole arm to Mary, after stooping to pick up the articles she had scattered about, and then stood waiting for further orders.

'Let the marriage come off at once, and be done with it,' cried out the father at last. 'But no more sea voyages; you'll have plenty to do looking after the garden, young man; while you can attend to the house, Miss, since you cannot be a lady.' Then William said 'Amen' to all that the father suggested, and so they went home to dinner.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

Parramatta—Orange Groves—Penrith—Emu Plains—The Zig-zag
—Educating Snakes—Over the Hills to Bathurst.

THE name of the Blue Mountains has always had a magic and mysterious sound in my mind. I used to see them in my fancy swimming in ether, with the vast distances and depths of the gullies causing that intense cobalt tint which gives to them their romantic title.

Once, while they were making the Zig-zag Railway, I went up with one of the engineers and stayed for two or three days at his camp. I can still remember a vision of dreamy grandeur, and how we caught a carpet snake, that python of Australia, the first day, and every hour fell across something or other in the shape of adventure. I also can remember how chilly the mornings were, with the ice on our water-pail, so that I discarded the easy costume of Victoria and took to my English clothing when I left Sydney.

It is a fineland we are passing through in the progress toward Parramatta. I had sailed long ago up the river lined with orange plantations, so did not want that route again; although I would have taken it had I not done so before, as there is no more picturesque river anywhere to be seen. I once described that sail up, with the orange blossom on the trees, to a poet friend. My friend had

never seen an orange grove at the time, so he gave a glowing description of the blossoms festooning the walks and dripping *overhead* as young lovers walk *beneath*. It was almost as fine and realistic as the other poet who raved about the 'pendant cones of luscious gold, down-hanging from the weighted boughs of high pineapple trees.' The first poet has learnt better by this time; the other is, I believe, cultivating a plantation of pineapple trees in Bedlam.

The Parramatta River is not without its share of tragedy, like many of the other beauteous spots about Sydney Harbour—beautiful Manley, &c.

Some years ago three boys hit upon one of the most diabolical ideas ever conceived by mortal as a means of making a livelihood. One of them hired a boat, the other started a registry for servants, and the third opened an old-clothes warehouse.

Their system was simplicity itself, and for a time fearfully successful. The registry-office partner advertised for servants and made engagements for those who applied, particularly 'New Chums,' who had no friends in the colonies. He pocketed their fees, and hired them for a gentleman on the Parramatta River. An appointment was made on the river bank, where the boatman partner was waiting to row the servants to their new home; agent and servants got into the boat and were rowed to a quiet part, and then despatched, stripped naked, and pitched into the water with a stone round their necks. It was the most wholesale and cold-blooded course of murder since the days of Burke and Hare, and equalled only by the late feats of Jack the Ripper, for they murdered their victims merely on the chance of the clothes and odd savings they might find in their boxes, which were conveyed back to partner No. 3 to sell in his shop.

They had all three been respectably brought up, lived with their friends, and were supposed to be engaged in offices in the city. The eldest was not much over twenty years of age, but had married a pretty young lady, and had two sweet children, to whom he was much attached. The others were under twenty.

These atrocious imitators of the Thugs of India succeeded in doing away with a great number of unwary new chums, for they fought shy of old colonials; only in an untimely moment they decoyed and killed the steward of a vessel who had run away from his post. The authorities were set on his track by the shipowners, and succeeded in unearthing the mystery and convicting the assassins, causing a wave of horror to pass over the continent as the fearful details were brought to light. Somehow I never cared to row on the Parramatta River after this discovery; mental pictures of the victims being washed down to the bay and devoured by the sharks there always came up to me when I thought of doing so, with that awful Sweeney Tod the Barber old-clothes store, where the innocent-looking youthful proprietor waited for customers.

So I take the train from Sydney, and go on to Parramatta that way, stopping at such quaint little stations as Redmayne, Homebush, Rookwood, Auburn—names suggestive of olden days, when the Government namers were conservative and homesick, looking only on this land as a place of exile, and trying to make it as much a reminder as they could of the far-off home.

Parramatta, the second oldest town in Australia, is where the first garden was set, the first corn-field sown, the first sheep put out to grass, and the first Government house built, which is still standing in the public park.

Many of the fruit-trees, lemons and oranges, are fully fifty years old, and very productive. They are the largest

of the kind in the world, many of them yielding over 400 dozens each per season. Oranges are the principal fruit cultivated at Parramatta, although all kinds of fruit thrive equally well here, such as the apple, pear, plum, peach, apricot, nectarine, loquat, &c.

The Governors' wives and sisters seem to have been of a homely and domestic turn in the olden times. It is told of one of them, Lady Mary Fitzroy, that a Sydney tradesman calling for orders in the early morning, and seeing her working about the place, slipped a 5*l.* note into her hand, thinking that she was the housekeeper, and wanting to win her good opinion ; which gift she accepted as quietly as it had been given.

We get along past Parramatta and its fine orchards, watching the bright golden balls against the dark green glossy leaves ; past Toongabbie, with its German vineyards and creek ; the Seven Hills, Blacktown, where the Ab-origines used to hold their big corroborees ; Doonside ; Rooty Hill, with its huge piles of logs for firewood, getting our first nearing view of the Blue Mountains, although, of course, we have seen them from the South Heads as the background of Sydney Town ; and then, after a halt at St. Mary's, we steam into Penrith, a large, low-lying, old-fashioned, and slow-going town, on the banks of the Nepean River, and, like unto Sodom, a veritable city of the plains.

We can now look over the tops of the houses across the Emu Plains to the Blue Mountains, rearing up rugged and wooded, with the first great viaduct and Little Zig-zag lying before us.

The Nepean River is one of the finest and most sublime rivers in Australia, with varied and picturesque banks, sometimes sloping gently to the water's edge, at other parts precipitous and overhung with foliage ; the waters have

also been proved to possess the same medicinal qualities as those of the spas of Baden-Baden, Munich, and Bath. At the spot where the Erskine Creek joins it this creek passes through some of the most stupendous gullies, arches, and caves which one could imagine.

After we have crossed the Emu Plains we begin our steep ascent of the mountains, getting, as we look from the windows of the carriage, a lovely panoramic view of the plains and country beyond, with the Nepean River flowing broadly through them. What a vast distance the eye takes in, with the foreground of flowers, rocks, shrubs, and trees below us. Then over Knapsack Gully by that triumph of Mr. John Whittion, the Viaduct of Seven Arches, the longest pillar of which is 126 feet, with a span of 50 feet on five of the arches.

We crawl up the mountains, to right and left, and left to right, now being pulled and now being pushed by the engine, at a gradient of 1 foot to 30, along steep cuttings, and over tree-tops; a most marvellous climb that is, up the first Zig-zag, although the full glory of the scenery has yet to come.

We are still going upwards or cutting through tunnels, with every few moments magnificent views flashing in front of us. At Glenbrook and Blaxland we have reached the height of 766 feet above sea-level—a rise of 679 feet during the last six miles. Blaxland is honeymoon country for newly-married couples, and Wascoe House Hymen's kissing-den. The old Bathurst highway runs along here, once thronged with bullock-waggon, now sequestered and suitable to the hopeful pairs who peregrinate along it, gathering samples of fern, mosses, and wild flowers, as fond mementoes of happy days, before the stern duties of life wake them up. Avoid Blaxland, oh ye hardened cynics and veterans of matrimony, if you come for scenery, and

do not wish to sneer in the heartless fashion of old married votaries, for 'Excelsior' is still the watchword.

Four miles upward and onward, and we have reached the 'Valley,' 1,048 feet above sea-level, and have a splendid prospect of giant gum trees with other lordly timber species, under which cluster ferns almost too numerous to classify. Here we can see Fitzgerald Creek, with numerous waterfalls rushing over the rocks and through the banks of botanical luxuriance. The waratah, Australia's pride, blooms here in perfection; also a complete exhibition of wild heaths, which, if in bloom, will not easily be forgotten.

Another mile takes us to Springwood, and up 232 feet more. About a mile from the station along the Hawksbury road, when you get to the top of the hill, you can look backwards for fifty miles right to Sydney Heads, over the Nepean River, over Windsor, Richmond, and Sydney, with the deep sea-line beyond Coogee and Bondi Bays—with always that delicious foreground of ferns, rocks, and mighty trees.

To describe the Blue Mountains in detail is utterly impossible in the space at present disposal; we must hurry on, for there is so much to admire before we reach Bathurst.

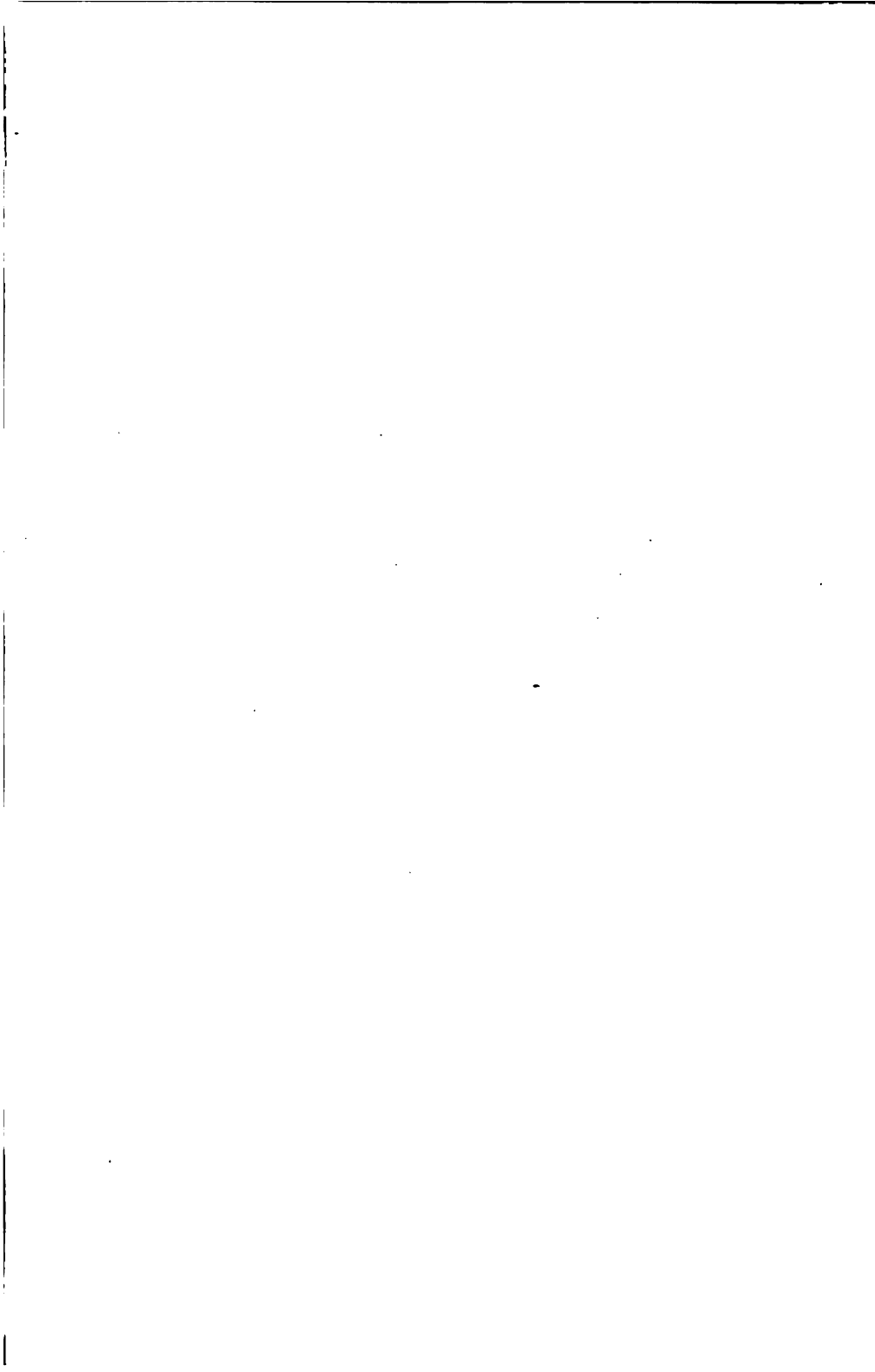
While at Springwood the visitor ought to see Sassafras, or Flying Foxes' Gully, where in ten minutes' walk you come upon the retreat of the flying foxes, and see hundreds of thousands of them hanging head downwards by day from the honeycombed holes of the rocks, which are all festooned with sassafras and supple-jacks—a tangle of tendrils, tree-branches, foliage, rocks, and bat-foxes, with waterfalls and the stream gliding along. At night these foxes seek the orchards and gardens, and great pests they are to the farmers. Here also abound the lyre bird, bronze-

winged pigeon, pheasant, and various kinds of parrots, with the wallaby, wild cat, wombat, and other denizens of the forest, not forgetting what travellers sometimes do forget—the snakes incidental to that romantic region. The carpet-snake, which is the largest and most lovely which Australia can boast of, is to be found in full growth in the gullies of the Blue Mountains; also the deadly black snake, a very impartial prince of darkness, which I have met pretty nearly in all the climates and latitudes of this vast continent.

I don't know if it has been decided whether the large carpet-snake is poisonous or not. A friend who wished to go out to Australia was appalled after he had been to the Zoological Gardens to learn from the catalogue that they were all, without exception, deadly. I remember once a cabdriver who saw one lying asleep, and without considering the deadly danger (he was an Irishman of course), opened his box, jumped down, and lifting the sleeping beauty in his arms, pitched it inside before it could wake up, and drove his living freight to the museum, where he sold it. I can't tell how they got the prisoner out, or whether he tried to bite any one, but I do know that they managed to keep him alive for some time.

My system of dealing with the snake world is to let them get away if they can from me, and to try to get away as far from them as I can. I have killed one or two, but then it was for the same reason that they bite us—pure nervousness, which made me vicious.

Don't despise the poor snakes. They must be of use in the universal economy, else they would not have been created. On the whole, I think they are much more graceful in their cursed state than they were before the Fall of Man, when they had legs, and were compelled to walk instead of glide; and I have heard that they are very





THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

affectionate after they are properly *trained*. I respect them very greatly, and but for the thought of that 'chunk of flesh,' I might be inclined to try them as pets. The main difficulty lies in the training, I would say. After that it would all go on smoothly, provided one had 'chunks of flesh' enough in one's corporation to spare for the education of those faithful and affectionate friends of man. Meanwhile, I am content to respect their good qualities and let them pass on.

We are still crying 'Excelsior' as we pass Faulconbridge, Numantia, and Woodford (late Buss's), the place which in former times was used as the halting-point of the gold-escort from the diggings to Sydney. We are now 2,191 feet above sea-level, and in the locality of eight picturesque waterfalls and a beautiful cavern—the retreat of a bushranger called King and his crafty gang. Then on to Hazelbrook and Blue Mountain Station, 2,899 feet above sea-level. We find here in the gullies the Livingston and Christabel Falls; in Dante's Glen also, rare views of cliff, valley, torrent, and woods.

Upwards another four miles and 437 feet, and we arrive at the Weatherboard or Wentworth Falls, where we witness one of the most stupendous leaps we have yet seen—a mountain torrent fall fully 1,000 feet. In time of flood what a fearsome sight this must be, with its tons rushing over that cliff, and landing with a thunderous din on the rocks below. To-day it looks like a number of silver threads weaving themselves amongst the rugged cliffs and trees. Dr. Lang, the prose poet of Australia, bursts into a pæan of passionate admiration. Darwin, the poetical naturalist, waxes fervent. He says: 'One stands on the brink of a vast precipice, and below one sees a grand bay or gulf . . . thickly covered with trees . . . showing head-and beyond headland. . . . About five miles to the front

another cliff extends which then appears to completely encircle the valley. . . . If we imagine a winding harbour with its deep waters, surrounded by bold, cliff-like shores, to be laid dry, and a forest to spring up upon its sandy bottom, we should then have the appearance and structure here exhibited.'

The scenery is ever increasing in grandeur as we rise. I have never in my life looked on anything like it, nor upon such a colour. It is like a landscape of lapis lazuli, with the ruins of giants' castles rearing up from the gorges below, all built from this rare stone. We have reached Katoomba, 3,849 feet above sea-level, and have still to ascend. Again we look back on Sydney and the country between, with a host of eeriesome valleys and startling weird rocks all round, with waterfalls on every side: the Witch's Leap, a leap of 150 feet of sheer space; Maud's Wonder; the Orphan's Rock, strangely romantic and soul-thrilling; the Katoomba Falls; the Bluff, where the mountain takes the form of a mighty cathedral with three enormous spires, while a rock in the shape of a woman stands at the entrance, with the Ruined Castle rock near by, and the Picton and Nathui ranges fully fifty miles away.

We are in the land of enchantment and petrified shapes, of waterfalls majestic, fantastic, and beautiful; Birdie's Dell, Ladies' Rock, Nellie's Glen, the Lurline, and, mightiest of all, the Gap, where great precipices close in on this valley of forest like a huge wall, with a narrow gateway leading out to other valleys and vaster mountains far beyond.

We are close to Blackheath and Gavott's Leap, a waterfall which drops without a break 520 feet, and then rushes down to a depth of 2,027 feet; a valley three-quarters of a mile wide, with the most inaccessible cliffs, 800 feet high.

We can hardly see the trees below us, for they look like

darker dots upon that universal shade of cobalt; and yet they are hundreds of feet in height. The water as it swings down looks like a wreath of snowy meshwork, the cliffs like built-up walls of masonry on a Titanic scale.

We now come to the highest point on our journey—Victoria, 8,422 feet above sea-level—where we find English trees growing in unity with Australian produce—the chestnut, oak, hawthorn, elm, poplar, pine, bunya-bunya, &c.

We can see from here most extensive views, embracing Mounts Tomato, Clarence, Wilson, and York, with the Fairy and Witches' Glens.

We are now going down the great Zig-zag, and upon Lithgow, the mining quarters, where coal, iron, copper, and other minerals are worked, and fine clay, terra cotta, &c., found.

Lithgow we do not see much of, as it is almost dark when we get there; enough, however, to be able to mark that it is devoted to work and commerce. They are not idle in Lithgow; in fact, it is the first New South Wales town where work seems to be the main object of life. A glance, as we pause to rest, at the shafts and chimneys in the middle of this great valley, and then we are off once more, to our next resting-place, Bathurst, the third town of importance in the colony.

CHAPTER XXVII

BATHURST

Early Days in the Colonies—Governor Macquarie and the Great Blue Mountains Highway—Bathurst.

DAY was fading as we reached Bathurst, a lovely twilight, all old gold and sombre purple, transforming the modern stone buildings for the time into pagodas and Oriental domes.

Bathurst is the third most important town in the Colony of New South Wales, situated on the south side of the River Macquarie, and lying almost due west from Sydney, upon a gently-sloping rise, surrounded by ranges. It is unmistakably a fine and flourishing-looking town, named by Governor Macquarie after Lord Bathurst in the year 1815, and begun shortly after Lawson, Blaxland, and Wentworth had discovered the passes over the Blue Mountains in 1813, where a road was made along the ridge of the mountains by the chain-gangs of convicts, a gigantic undertaking most successfully carried out.

It was on January 24, 1788, that the first convict-fleet anchored at Botany Bay, after a voyage of eight months from England, making in all, as the start of the Colony, 36 officers, 168 soldiers, with 40 wives, 548 male convicts, and 230 female prisoners, the most abandoned of their sex. One chaplain had been fixed upon at the last moment to teach morality to this breathing concourse of vice and

infamy. Botany Bay had to be discarded at once as an unfit place for a settlement, and it was just by an accident that Captain Phillip, the commander, discovered Port Jackson. He got into it and proclaimed it an English colony only a few days before the two French ships of war, 'Boussoli' and 'Astrolabe,' under the command of La Perouse, followed them through the Heads.

Commander Phillip and his successors had anything but easy times before them during these early years; the proportion of men to women being six to one, the constant scenes of violence made up a record of crime too horrible to relate. To quote from the early records:

'Feelings of horror overcome us when we look back at the early days of New South Wales. Under an absolute government the settlers crowded together on a narrow space. The soil was a barren sand; every yard required for cultivation had to be gained by removing enormous trees of a hardness that tried the temper of the best axes wielded in the most skilful hands. On one side was an unknown shore and a shipless sea, on the other an apparently limitless country inhabited by savages, in which not a step could be taken without danger of being totally lost—a country which produced no wild fruit or root fit for the sustenance of man, and, with the exception of a wandering kangaroo or shy, swift emu, no game of any size fit for food. The mass of the community were slaves—slaves without the contentment of negroes or Russian serfs—for they had been born in a free country, and could not learn to be happy or submit, even if in the matter of food and lodgings they had been well provided, instead of being burnt with heat, perished with cold, and always half-starved. They were slaves labouring hard but scarcely producing anything, with the want of practical men over them, and the moral blight upon them; there was at first

no discernment between degrees of crime, the vilest and the most venial being chained together. The overseers were prisoners selected by the favouritism of tyrannical and brutal officers: as Colonel Lachlan Macquarie remarked on his arrival in 1809, the Colony consisted entirely of those who had been transported and those who ought to have been.'

During those twenty-one years' interval between the landing of Governor Phillip and the coming of Macquarie lie the record of imbecility on the part of the governors, and untrammelled vice, cruelty, brutishness, and nameless foulnesses in the governed, sinking the entire population into the lower depths. Twenty-one years of incapable government, unbridled license, and unrecordable infamies, with their accompanying evils—famine, disease, and death!

Governors Phillip, Hunter, King, and lastly the martinet and tyrant Bligh, were good enough and brave enough all of them, but utterly unfitted for their posts and the management of this wonderful infant.

Shiploads of convicts came out to die like rotten sheep, those who had managed to escape dying on board escaping nothing else in the form of degradation, the sycophants, male or female, being the only convicts who had a chance to get these hell-torments softened by fawning upon and pandering to the particular vices of their overseers and being traitors to their companions.

I heard a story of a girl who had been transported for theft, and which, I believe, was quite an ordinary way of dealing with domestics, when masters wished to be rid of them, in the good old times.

She was country-bred, and had the misfortune to be pretty as well as young; so much so, that her youthful master fell desperately and, what proved her ruin, honourably in love with her, and wanted to marry her—an idea

so horrible in the eyes of his father, a magistrate, that he resolved to get rid of this threatened blot upon the family escutcheon.

The ridding operation was easy enough in those days when stealing was punished by hanging : a teaspoon, as in this case, dropped into the servant's box, and afterwards discovered there, did the trick. Then the humanity of the outraged master shone out conspicuously, when he nobly interceded for the life of the girl who had wronged him, and so got her sentence commuted to transportation to New South Wales.

Scene second takes place on board ship, where this innocent victim of love is forced to endure the company of the vilest of her sex, every morning rising to a day of misery and outrage, every night falling asleep with horror in her soul.

In those convict ships it was the custom of the officers and military to pick out mistresses from the convicts for the voyage. They did this because it was considered that a mistress made the best spy, and so would be able to forewarn them of the numerous mutinies which are constantly being hatched below ; at least, this was the official reason which they gave for the honourable custom.

So the country-bred girl, who had been plunged by her noble master straight from Sunday School into this floating hell, was chosen early by one of the tyrants, and forced to submit to her fate ; the law of England had made her, a slave, fair sport for any beast who chose to abuse her.

In the Colony she changed hands as her overseers felt inclined ; it was the custom of the land, and nothing was thought about it. Yet it greatly consoled me to hear that afterwards the master's son, whose ill-advised love had driven her from home and virtue, unable to bear the loss of her, had followed her out and made her an honest woman,

according to the laws which had destroyed her. It was pleasant to think that the proud old county magnate had to open his paternal arms and receive, as his daughter, a convicted thief, and worse, instead of an honest servant-maid.

This is what, in the olden times, was termed 'colonial experience.' As Blair says in his 'Encyclopædia of Australasia,' 'With all these wrongs, added to starvation when the supplies ran short, could it be wondered if, under such a system of despotism, without discipline in the Colony, and in the face of such neglect at home, the descendants of these men (*and women*) had grown fiercely disloyal and anti-British? And yet it is not so. The Australians are a loyal, order-loving, law-abiding race, as they have recently proved more than once.'

When, however, Governor Macquarie came out, all this disorder was inquired into and put a stop to. Every encouragement was held out to convicts to behave honestly, work out their freedom, get married, and settle down in the land, and so the nucleus was laid of the mighty success which has followed these wise measures. He mustered the convicts each Sunday and went with them to church; he commenced a hospital and set apart proper burial-places, remodelled the Courts of Law, divided the town into police districts, levied tolls to keep the roads in repair, and neglected nothing, in his restless activity, to elevate the moral tone of this community and encourage forest agriculture and cattle-breeding, settling large numbers of the convicts on farms of their own, and giving them their liberty whenever he saw that it could safely be done.

His road-making is what he will be most gratefully remembered by, and his greatest achievement in that line is undoubtedly the highway which he formed from Sydney to Bathurst over the Blue Mountains, which were, before his arrival, considered to be utterly impassable.

The difficulties in the way were enormous ; for fifty miles the highway lay through the most rugged country, where yawning chasms had to be bridged across, solid rocks cut away, ridges circumvented, banks levelled and built up. It has never been calculated how many lives were lost before the Blue Mountains could be walked over ; but in less than fifteen months from the start Governor Macquarie was able to drive Mrs. Macquarie in his carriage right over the mountains to the fertile plains beyond, and plan out the town called Bathurst.

After this the Colony went ahead : the sheep were driven out to the plains to thrive, bullock-drays lined the highways constantly, and men who had come out as poor emigrants or despised criminals were soon able to return with assured fortunes.

I have heard from the old men of Bathurst how their fathers helped to make this road, and the hardships and dangers they passed through ; of the great carpet snakes they encountered, the death adders and yellow snakes ; it all sounded like the building of the Pyramids under the drivers' lash. It would take a book in itself to describe half the legends of blacks, bushrangers, and convicts trying to escape, thinking to get to China overland, and after weeks of horrible sufferings having to return like skeletons and give themselves up.

This great Blue-Mountain highway is still spoken of as an historical event, as the ancient Britons may have spoken about the great Roman road which led over the mountains to Celtland. I heard the subject discussed over and over again in the bar-parlour of a little Bathurst inn kept by an old ex-convict, who still retained much of the military training and habits of his early prison days. I used to feel amused at the manner in which he constituted himself judge and guide of the drinking capabilities of his customers.

His liquors were all exceptionally good, and his measure liberal, for he prided himself on having the best-conducted house in Bathurst; so he stood and counted up the number of drinks people had at his bar, and never allowed them to exceed three servings. If any of them wanted a fourth, he would say, in a fatherly but firm tone, 'I'll stand the next, and after that go elsewhere if you want any more.'

This was a fixed rule with the old hotel-keeper, and as the main body of his patrons were all 'old Lags' like himself, they understood what his 'No' meant, and never insisted. He was a well-informed man, with a face somewhat resembling old Barnum's in its benevolent expression and smoothness. I think, on the whole, that I enjoyed my evenings at this ex-convict's hotel, surrounded by these relics of early colonial life, more than I have done anywhere else, besides coming away with the fixed impression that there may be worse angels in heaven than the penitent thief.

Very different was my experience in one of the other hotels here, where I saw one of the most dastardly fights that I ever looked upon; fortunately neither of the combatants were colonials.

It was pay-night amongst the railway men, and they had gathered here to drink some of their wages. One of them, a tall ruddy-faced young Scotchman, who I discovered afterwards was a new chum, and therefore expected to fight his way into respect, had come in with a friend to have a drink, when a gang of his fellow-workmen entered, and straightway started to pitch offensive remarks at him. There had been a running-match that afternoon, in which he had been victor, which added to their malice and fury.

As I stood close by listening and waiting for the result, I noticed a very small ugly-looking man sidle sneakingly

up to him with an empty quart pot in his hand, and address him in a strong Lancashire brogue, to which the young fellow replied in a laughing but broad Western accent. I could hear and see enough to understand that the little sneak wished to fasten a quarrel upon the stranger, sure of being backed up by the others, who were waiting as I was upon the result.

Then, all at once, as the Scotchman laughingly turned his face from his tormentors, I saw the quart pot hurled at his head, and him staggering backwards, with a great gash over his left eye, for a moment dazed and blinded.

I expected to see the other men cry 'shame,' and kick the little coward into the road, instead of which I was astonished to hear them shout out :

'Good, Bill ; at him, now's your time ; punish the——'

Like a tiger the little man sprang on to the still-dazed stranger, and bringing him to the floor, fastened his teeth in his cheek, and began to gnaw away like a savage dog.

I had often heard of these miners' and Black Country modes of fighting, where ears were eaten and eyes gouged out, but this was my first experience, and it filled me with rage and horror. Hastily looking round, and seeing no one attempt to separate this mongrel English-speaking cannibal from his victim, I ran forward, and, watching my chance, sat down with a sudden flop upon his beastly little stomach, knocking the wind out of him in an instant, and giving my countryman a chance for his life.

We had a stormy five minutes after this—pots flying about the bar, and things getting smashed up. However, the landlord came to my rescue, and helped me to clear the premises, and get the young Scotsman's face sponged, after which I offered to go with him and see the battle out in the moonlit streets.

'There is no use,' he said, despondently. 'They have

all got a down on me, and will swear anything against me. They mean to drive me out.'

And, true enough, in a few moments some of the police broke in, and arrested the young man for breaking the peace and assaulting the little man. Fortunately for him I had a letter of introduction to one of the magistrates, so that I was able to give a fair account of the incident and get the ear of justice; otherwise he would have been fined, and disgraced, and deprived of all prospect of work.

It is strange how one thing will bring up another. As I made a couch of that unworthy stomach, I recalled the stand-up fight which I had seen between the aboriginals on the banks of the George River, and contrasted the two battles.

Bathurst is a healthy and picturesque town, whichever way you look at it. I took a sketch of it from near the English College, looking over it, with some goats grazing beside me, with the early morning mist upon it, and felt as if I was drawing some old English town with old-fashioned square-built towers and irregular houses. From Havanah Street I also sketched it; from the Vale Road, with the open fences lining the roads, and from the suburbs, getting romantic peeps at Kelso and Perth.

Bathurst is mainly an agricultural place, although there are numerous goldfields lying about, also copper and silver mines; and I must not forget to mention the handsome buildings which comprise the court-house, gaol, school of arts, town hall, and post office.

The last day I spent at Bathurst my eyes were dazzled by a very radiant apparition. It was an Indian prince, gorgeously arrayed, who was sauntering in leisurely state along the streets, and seemingly absorbing most of the sunlight near him.

When I got close to him, he stopped and smiled upon

me with a gentle Oriental sadness, and salaamed as to an acquaintance, and then I recognised him. It was the body-servant of my old shipmate, the Chevalier Stuart Cumberland, who was here on a thought-reading expedition. As I had never seen my friend perform, I gave the Hindoo a message for his master that I would be at his *séance* that night, and in the afternoon received a formal invitation to come upon the platform.

However, that evening I was engaged until too late with Mr. Bean, of the English College, on business, and so had to forego the pleasure. Before we parted the Chevalier joined us, resplendent in evening dress. He was disappointed that I had not turned up, as he had announced that I would illustrate his subjects on the blackboard, and so was I, for I would gladly have obliged him that way if he had prepared me; but Stuart had great faith in me as an impromptu artist, and so thought there was no necessity of giving me any notice. He told me that a substitute had volunteered from the audience, but from the artistic specimens displayed he considered art not yet a strong point in the education of Bathurst, as with all his skill at reading thoughts he could not tell whether the marks represented the animals which went into the Ark, or bits of the Ark itself after they were done with it.

He told me that he had been on my tracks all through Victoria, trying to catch me up, but until then had been just one day too late.

I was much amused at his experience amongst the Chinese murderers at Echuca. A couple of Chinamen had murdered and robbed a digger there, and although the evidence was pretty complete, still it was all circumstantial, and none of the loot had been discovered; therefore the Government had sent the Chevalier up to try to read their thoughts, and so get at the particulars of the crime that way.

My friend informed me that he had got them out of their cells, and tried all his blandishments and arts to penetrate their Celestial reserve without success. All he could read of their thoughts, as they stood smiling in front of an old wall, went no farther than the time-stains upon it ; therefore he came to the conclusion that they were a couple of blank idiots, without the thin side of a thought between them.

Possibly he was right. Probably the murder had been such a trivial affair in their estimation that they had forgotten all about it. It is not an easy matter to penetrate to the inner workings of the cranium of an Asiatic.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TOWARD BOURKE

From Bathurst to Bourke, and Towns between—Orange—To the Fish River Caves from Bathurst, and back by Katoomba—'Auld Lang Syne.'

From Bathurst to Bourke is a long and somewhat uninteresting ride of about 359 miles of monotonous plain, with here and there an abrupt sugar-loaf mountain starting up like a knot within a basin of porridge—such as New Year Range, Mount Hopeless, &c. We are passing through the great pastoral district of Wellington, and through the counties of Cowper, Canbelego, Oxley, Narromine, Gordon, and Wellington.

From Bourke the Darling River runs down and joins the Murray at Wentworth—a rising town and wharfage, where, when the season permits, steamers can trade right up to Bourke and down to Adelaide.

People staying at Bourke can look over the plains and watch the train coming along the line for sixty or seventy miles, so that there is no danger of their missing it. They can finish their sleep, get dressed, and have breakfast leisurely after it has been sighted.

Dubbo is the next place of importance on the line from Bourke—built on the Macquarie River, across which a fine bridge, 300 feet long, has been thrown. The population is about 3,200, and the ground is much taken up for farming

purposes. Although mainly pastoral, it is well-laid out, has some good stone and brick buildings, and a public library of 1,500 volumes.

Orange has a population of 9,461, and is famed for its bracing climate. It stands 2,843 feet above the sea level, and possesses a library of 3,500 volumes. When 'A Colonial Tramp' is published I trust it will possess 3,502, for it is a weakness of mine to gauge the worth of a people by the number of volumes they possess in their public libraries. In many of our country places in England they have started workmen's clubs. The vicar of the place generally gets it up, furnishes it with a billiard-table, and one or two harmless dailies and weeklies. This is generally considered enough for the sluggish brain of the dormant Saxon. And from what I have seen of these men, I think their spiritual guides are about right; but when men and women possess brains enough to be able to make up their minds to cross the ocean in search of happiness and freedom, then they want a little more than these bishop-consecrated 'guides, philosophers and friends,' are able or willing to give them. No one ever expects to find in such a country as Australia such slow worms as one runs against constantly in the green lanes and clay fields of used-up England.

Orange is what we might well call an intellectual farmers' town. In their School of Arts they have the finest hall to be found throughout the Colony. They have wide streets, and over 26,000 acres under cultivation. I think, if it could be possible, I'd like an appointment as art director or editor of the future *Orange Art Magazine* when it comes out, for I am fond of bracing air and growing crops, and I like the name of this prosperous town.

And yet I don't know; when I look over the map of Australia and its present divisions, my ambition aims at being a citizen of some of the larger portions—Queensland,

South Australia, or Western Australia. What boundless possibilities there lie for future greatness and advancement in these mighty slices. Of course they will all be subdivided into different colonies in the future, for each of them is too great for one Parliament to be able to manage. There will be a North-Western Australia, Western and South-Western Colony, with three capitals; also South, Central, and Northern Australia, and North and South Queensland. On the whole, I'd rather be one of the literary and artistic powers of one of these unnamed colonies than settle down lazily to such an easy post as Orange would be. One thing, however, which is perfectly clear to me is, that the Malthusian question need not be studied yet for the next thousand years by Englishmen, with such a noble heritage lying idly waiting upon the making up of their sluggish minds.

It would not be proper to leave this district, having returned to Bathurst, without visiting the Jenolan, or Fish River Caves, one of the natural marvels of this marvellous land—Sydney Harbour and the Jenolan Caves are what visitors are mostly expected to praise; and I would add, the Blue Mountains. No one with an eye for beauty, a sense of grandeur, or hankering after the supernatural, can possibly hold his tongue who has seen either of these wonderful places. Sometimes I have been disappointed. I think I was a little at Rockhampton, when I had spent a day at the Olsen Caves there; not quite, for I had pleasant company that day, which made up for the anticipation not realised; but nothing could possibly be more fantastic, more eerie, more beautiful or startling than the Fish River Caves.

I went alone from Bathurst to Oberon—the final halting-place, along undulating plains watered by the Macquarie River, down through broken table-lands, past quagmires

and fairy rings, through an enchanted region, which may well be called Oberon's Land—with the fairy township at the foot, where wanderers might rest for awhile before penetrating Queen Titania's special domain.

Oberon lies about thirty-two miles from Bathurst, on the Fish River Creek. It is principally a farming district, and has two hotels—the Royal and the Welcome Inn—and 500 of a population; a sweet little village, where one may well fill out a few days going about.

Jerry Wilson is the guide, who takes us under his wing at Oberon, and starts with us next morning for the famous Caves, which lie about eighteen miles distant.

We pass one or two farms on the wayside, which is lined with gum trees. As we get near to the Caves the country begins to grow very rugged, with enormous trees starting up over the ridge, which is 4,200 feet high. We go down a very steep road, while 500 feet below stretches a long, narrow gorge, with abrupt mountains on either side, partly covered with huge trees, with great boulders up-starting on all sides—a Dante-esque picture, with a silvery line of water rushing along at the bottom. It is a wonderful valley this for grandeur, for the sides are at places almost perpendicular, making one giddy to look at them, while there appears no exit from where you stand and gaze at the wall-like mountain's side beyond. To get to the Caves you must take a zig-zag pathway cut along the face of this precipice, until you come to Jerry's house and the entrance to the first cavern.

Travellers who have seen both places compare these caves to the Grotto of Adelsberg, near Trieste. They are formed both of prismatic stalactites and stalagmites, in all sorts of rare shapes—carvings, pendants in crystal and alabaster, the limestone drippings of long ages. Where the daylight penetrates, it resembles the filtering in of subdued

light through marble, richly-carved domes of cathedrals; when they are lighted up by the torches and lime-lights the effect of surpassing splendour of colour is positively blinding.

The first cave we enter by the 'Grand Arch' is called the 'Imperial Cave,' which is from seventy to ninety feet high—very rough and rugged, with boulders on all sides shelving away. Here we light our candles, and, following Jerry, our guide, come to the 'Woolshed,' so called because the designs of the alabaster-like stalactites look like the wool upon a heavy-coated sheep's back. How gently Titania lures us on, reserving her greatest beauties and most delicate carvings. She unfolds her scenes like a pantomimic transformation combination, proving that Nature can be artful as well as our modern masters of scenic effect.

The 'Architect's Studio' comes next, where long stalactites seem to hang ready-made and waiting on orders for churches; next the 'Margaretta Cave'—large, roomy, and covered with delicate tracery. 'Helena's Cave' enshrines the upright figure of a chaste Madonna, clad in virgin white. The 'Lucinda, or Diamond Cavern,' greets us next with its glittering floor of scintillating diamonds, and walls draped over with filigree work. In 'Katie's Bower' we find the church organ waiting on the Titan fingers to sound those multitudinous pipes. In the 'Bone Cave' we find all sorts of petrified wallaby bones. The 'Crystal Rock,' which has the appearance of an everlasting fountain playing over a crystal grotto; the 'Imperial and Shawl Cavern,' the 'Lady's Finger and Lolly' caves lure us onward; then the 'Show Room,' 'Lot's Wife,' the 'Crystal City,' the 'Mystery,' 'Nelly's Grotto,' 'Silence Cave,' 'Fairy's Retreat,' where we wait expectantly on the elves,

who have for the present run away, leaving the bats behind to tell them when we have gone; the 'Diamond Wall,' 'Crystal Palace,' 'Garden Palace,' 'Jewel Casket,' 'Gem of the West,' the 'Queen's Jewels,' and 'The Underground River.'

What vistas of romance open up to us as we penetrate these Caves through this mountain, listening to the descriptions, and looking round us as we go climbing and crawling along, squeezing through narrow doorways, or between pillars made by the stalactites above meeting and joining with the stalagmites below. It is all a dazzle, all a bewilderment and aching of the back and brain. At last we are out of it, as tired out by the glitter and colour as if we had been looking at a Drury-Lane pantomime drawn out to the length of a Chinese comedy.

I read an account of the organic causes written by the Government geologist, Mr. Wilkinson, with great relief, as it brings me down from the idea that it is all a phantasmagoria. It is extremely interesting to know how long it took Mother Nature to work out this sort of effect; that this marble-work of hers was once a mass of living corals, stone, lilies, and molluscs. I don't at all care about what it reveals in the Siluro-Devonian epochs; or how the decaying vegetation of some ancient forest is invisibly distilling carbonic acid, which the rain-storms clear away and carry into a thousand acid streams to distant oceans; nor how the land sinks and is pitched up again, and reproduced in these exquisite shapes. Sufficient for the day is the deliciousness thereof.

As I turn away from the Caves, I am glad that I have been able to visit them, for they are something to recall if ever I wish to realise Fairyland either with pen or pencil.

I now take the bridle-track towards Katoomba, as I am told this is the most romantic and wildly imposing, if more tedious, of the ways; and I find it to be so—something that I would not have missed for double the toil and trouble involved.

Up the ridge of the spur of mountain we walk for 2,550 feet, with the great high wall of the main range far above us, with gloomy arches and natural bridges to go under and cross over, with crags like huge castles lowering up from the valley, and great trees spreading their covered or bare branches all round. Along the Black Range, zig-zagging towards the Little River, with splendid views on all sides, the deepness of the great Jenolin Valley, Cox's Range, Mellow Gap, with The Brothers, two-peaked hill, behind it, and to the left Katoomba, rearing high against the clouds. Doré never walked up this way, but he imagined it very nearly in some of his 'Inferno' and 'Quixote' illustrations; and as he has pictured it so we may leave it.

We sometimes walk along the edge of an abrupt precipice and look down upon a deep blue-green ocean of tree-tops, with the intense purple-blue hills beyond on the Black Range. We come by the old cart-track which led to Bendo and Hartley, then along the top of the ranges, 3,200 feet above the sea, for a good four miles, then down to the valley of the Little River, which we cross and follow along amongst its pebbles and clear water; up again to the Mina Mina Range, and, after we cross it, down again to the Gibraltar Creek, where, after we cross it three times as we follow its course for half a mile, we come to the homestead of Peter Reilly, who makes us welcome and enlivens us with a flow of racy stories about stockmen, bushrangers, convicts, black fellow, and snakes.

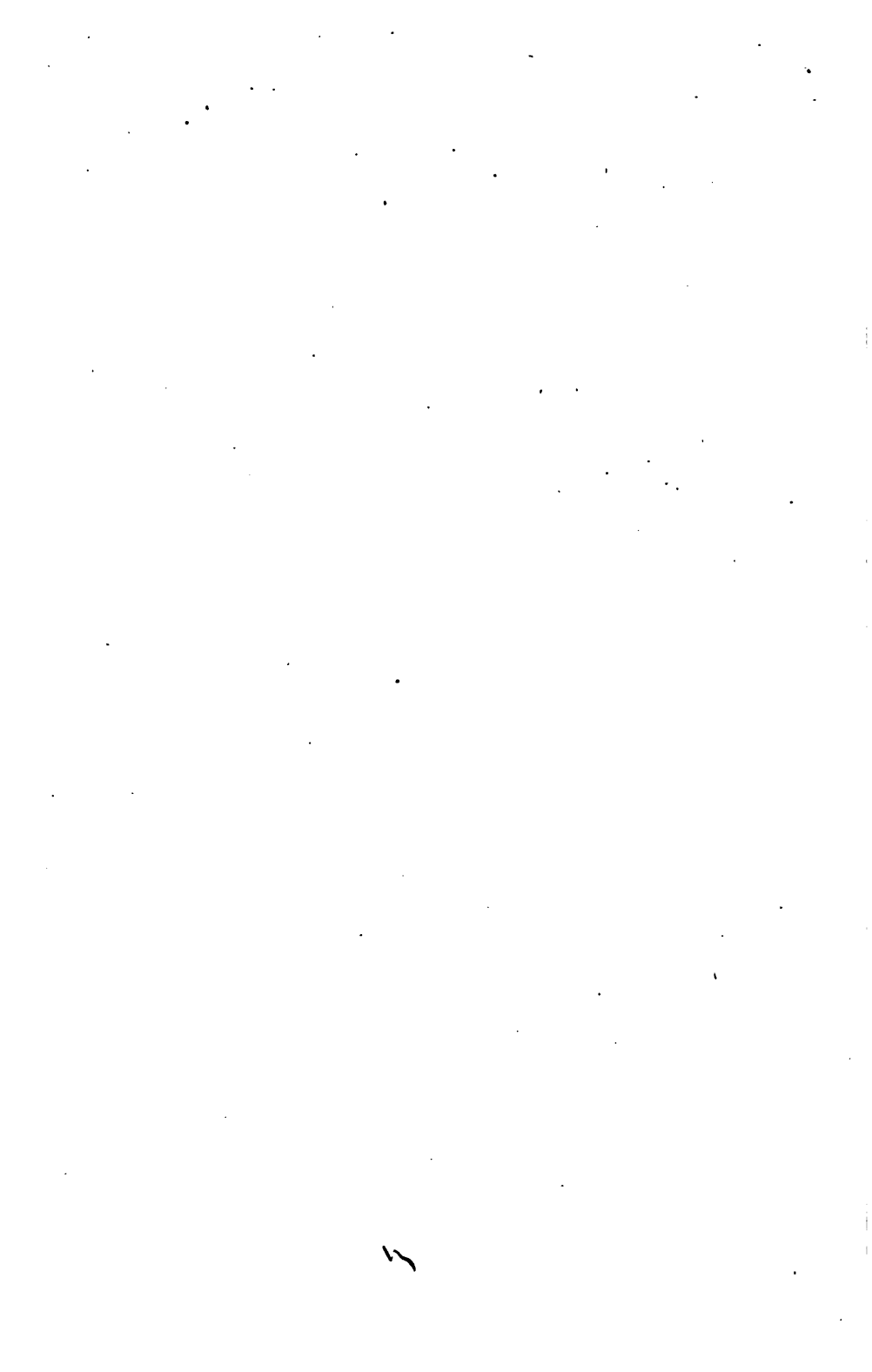
Again we cross the Gibraltar Creek at its junction with the Cox River, seeing on our way a great wall of lovely rose-tinted granite dividing the valley. At the Cox and Gibraltar Creeks we notice the huge boulders of grey granite, which lie about or start up in fantastic shapes, while the water runs along in deep pools, or forms countless cascades. The Toad and Pinnacle rocks are passed; then gradually we rise again, until we come to the Cox River; then on until we come to the Migalong Creek, and after this almost a level track through the bush, boulders, and valleys, until we reach the Glen of Katoomba, up which we climb under overhanging cliffs, past the Boar's Head Rock and the Castle Cliffs, which look for all the world like a granite castle—buttresses, turrets, battlements, square and round towers, all complete even to the joints and lines of the masonry. Soon we pass the Falls and the Explorer's Tree, which marks the farthest distance Blaxland, Lawson, and Wentworth got to in their Blue Mountains expedition of May, 1813; and then, striking the old Bathurst road, we have arrived at Katoomba station.

It was at the Katoomba Hotel, kept by a Scotsman, Mr. Brown, that I met a Mr. Baird, a selector, and owner of a very fine house. Three Scotsmen met together in a foreign land with the grand result—a drink of mountain dew, and a song—the song of songs to Scotsman—'Auld Lang Syne.' How we made the rafters dirl as we sang it with full voices, clasped hands, and waving heads! Outside the mists were rolling up the valley as densely as they could have done in bonnie Scotland, while overhead a real Scotch mist was falling and drenching everything. It was all complete as a picture and a poem, and the visitors came out to listen and laugh at our enthusiasm, and ended by joining in the chorus—

Then here's a han,' my trusty freen',
An' gie 's a han' o' thine,
An' we'll tak' a richt gude willie wacht,
For the days o' old lang syne.

It was my last warm shake of the hand in New South Wales, and whenever I hear the song since I always think of the Blue Mountains and the hospitable landlord of Katoomba.

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